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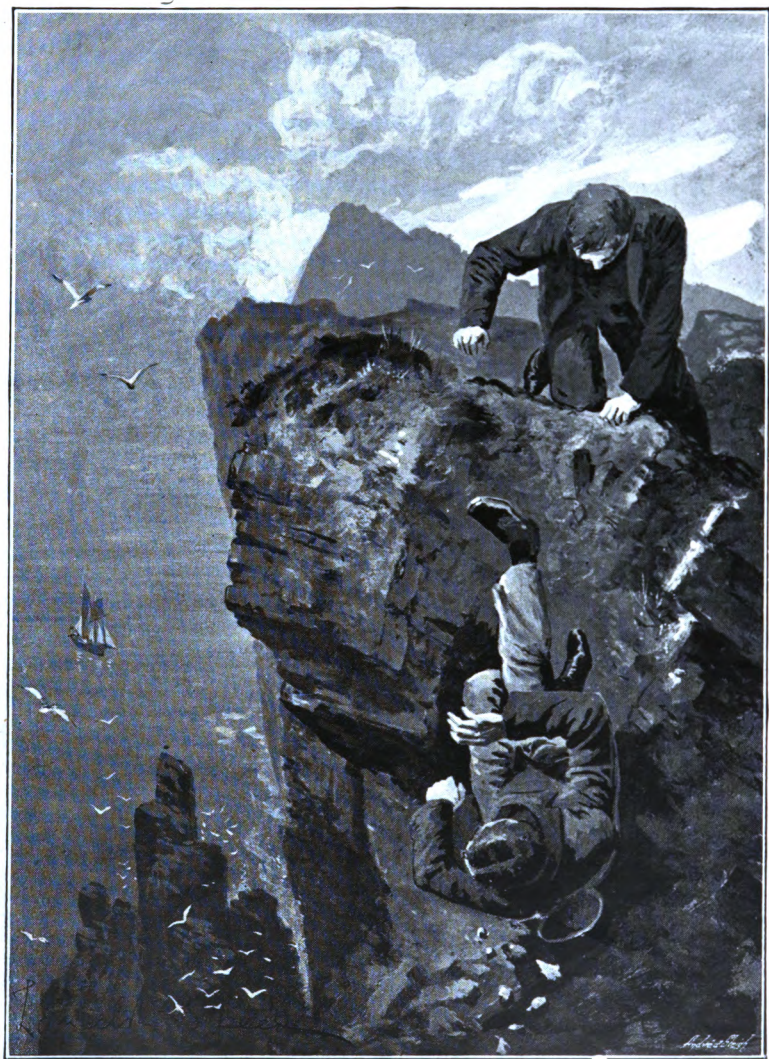


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STIRRING TALES
OF
COLONIAL ADVENTURE.



HURLED ME AS HE IMAGINED INTO SPACE.

P. 363.

Front.

STIRRING TALES
OF
COLONIAL ADVENTURE

BY
SKIPP BORLASE
AUTHOR OF 'DARING DEEDS,' 'TALES OF THE BUSH,'
ETC.

LONDON
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THE OVERSEER AT COOINDA.

CHAPTER I

CATTLE-MUSTERING.—AN ADVENTURE WITH A BULL.— THE STOCK-YARD.

A VAST sun of apparently molten brass gleams down from out a sky of seeming burnished steel, upon a plain as yellow as the stubble of a freshly-reaped wheat-field, and which is dotted here and there with clumps of gum-trees, whose trunks and boughs are well-nigh white as ivory, whilst their quivering foliage is almost sage-green.

The other most striking features of the landscape are a far-away, one-storied, deep-verandahed "station," which, being interpreted, means the home of an Australian squatter; and in another direction a nine-feet-high, white-washed post-and-rail fence, covering perhaps a square acre of ground, having an opening on each side through which three horsemen could have ridden abreast.

This is the "still life" of the scene; but what is that cloud of dust that comes rolling over the sun-scorched

grass-lands like the smoke of cannon when the atmosphere is too heavy for it to rise? what causes the ground to shake, as with the first throes of an earthquake? and what produces the sound which resembles the boom of heavy seas upon the shore?

As the cloud rolls nearer, it is seen to be o'ertopped by bayonets or by horns; great splashes of brown and black-and-white show through it, with a point or two of scarlet upon the flanks, and close to the points of scarlet long lithe serpents seem to be continually leaping through the air, accompanied by a cracking as of rifles.

But in another minute the mystery is solved, for the dust, the noise, and the earth-trembling are then seen to be all caused by some six hundred head of cattle, the spots of scarlet are the red "Garibaldi" shirts of their drivers, the leaping serpents are the fifteen-feet-long thongs of their stock-whips, by the dexterous plying of which they manage to keep the great herd together, and by whose aid they will presently drive them into that great railed-in enclosure, so that they may undergo their annual re-branding on the morrow.

It seems simply wonderful how six men can perform such a feat, for the cattle are as wild as forest deer, and the bulls as fierce as bison, and not infrequently charge out of the ranks at a horseman, whose long, weedy, mustang-like steed is, however, as thoroughly equal to the occasion as its rider's whip.

The rush is avoided by the one, and the long green silk lash of the other is capable of making the toughest-hided bull feel as though he had been goaded with a red-hot nail.

It is the squatter and his overseer who ride in the rear. On the left flank gallop two stockmen, and on

the right tear along two youths, still in their teens: moleskin-breeched, Garibaldi-shirted, and cabbage-tree hatted, who are quite as well up to the work in hand as their elders, and who, perhaps, enjoy it a great deal more, for as they dash along they burst forth into the following song—

“While the morning light beams on the fern-matted streams,
And the water-pools flash in its glow,
Down the ridges we fly, with a loud ringing cry—
Down the ridges and gullies we go!
And the cattle we hunt, they are racing in front,
With a roar like the thunder of waves;
As the beat and the beat
Of our swift horses’ feet
Start the echoes away from their caves!

Like a wintry shore that the waters ride o’er,
All the lowlands are filling with sound;
For swiftly we gain, where the herds on the plain,
Like a tempest are tearing the ground!
And we’ll follow them hard to the rails of the yard,
O’er the gulches and mountain-tops grey,
Where the beat and the beat
Of our swift horses’ feet
Will die with the echoes away!”¹

The last three lines of each verse were repeated with increased strength of lung by way of chorus, and accentuated by the rifle-like cracking of the stock-whips; but all at once a sturdy little bull, as though accepting the song as a vaunt or a challenge, swept out of the herd on the boys’ side, head down and tail up, and evidently bent on mischief.

Lubra, Dan Macdonald’s (the elder lad) favourite wire-haired kangaroo hound, was bounding along, just ahead of his cousin George Barrington’s horse at the

¹ *The Song of the Cattle Hunters*, by Henry Kendall, who has been called Australia’s Edgar Allan Poe.

time, who was riding a little in advance of the other youth; and recoiling instinctively from the sidelong swirling head and horns of "Toro," it ran almost under the animal's feet, which, attempting to avoid trampling on it, and to obey the hand and knee of its rider at the same time, came very naturally to grief upon the hard, slippery ground; perceiving which the bull, snorting and foaming, came rushing down straight upon both, and in half a minute more would have indubitably settled horse and lad had not the latter's comrade come to the rescue in the very nick of time, and sent his fifteen-feet length of stock-whip thong flying out with such effect that the lash cut a bit of solid flesh as big as a date-stone out of "Toro's" brindled hide, and sent him back into the herd changed even in *sex*, for he was completely *cowed*.

"Thanks, old fellow; and confound that dog of yours at the same time!" exclaimed George Barrington, not over-graciously, as he skilfully lifted his horse on to its feet without dismounting, and then rubbed tenderly down the leg that had fared somewhat badly, for the space of a second or two, between the hard ground and the beast's superincumbent weight.

"The dog couldn't help it," retorted Dan, whilst the flush of anger mounted to his cheeks, for Lubra had once saved his life by tackling a huge carpet-snake that had coiled its slimy length around him whilst he slept, and was on the point of striking at him with its venomous fangs, when Lubra seized it up close to the head, and gnawed and gnawed at its neck until it was dead.

With Dan therefore it was a decided case of "love me, love my dog"; but Lubra gave back love for love, and

the hound's affection was all the more valued, perhaps, because Dan wasn't at all sure that he possessed any other, for he had neither mother, brother, nor sister, and his father very evidently cared a great deal more for his *adopted* son, George Barrington, than he did for himself; whilst as for George, he knew it every bit as well, and the why and wherefore into the bargain, which poor Dan for a long time did not.

Dan was ill-built and ugly, whilst George had the figure of Adonis, and a wonderfully handsome face to match it; but it was because each boy so closely resembled his mother that the one was loved and the other almost hated.

George Barrington's mother had been Mr. Macdonald's first cousin and first love (first worship would be, perhaps, the better term), and she had jilted him for a handsome but impecunious infantry officer, whereupon he had married out of spite, and within a week, the ugliest woman of his acquaintance, who became in time Dan's mother, producing in her offspring a perfect miniature edition of herself.

As for the beautiful coquette, she accompanied her husband to India, where, after the lapse of some years, she was suddenly carried off by cholera, only a week or so after he had succumbed to too many "brandy-pawnees," leaving her almost destitute.

In her last moments she considerably bequeathed her boy (her only child) to the care of the cousin to whom she had most dishonourably shirked giving herself; and he, having by that time killed his own wife by cold neglect and undisguised abhorrence and scorn (which act like a slow but deadly poison on some sensitive natures), accepted the bequest as soon as ever

he heard of it, had the boy transferred from India to Cooinda Station per P. and O. service and bullock-cart, and from the moment of the youngster's arrival raised him to as high an altitude in his favour above that occupied by his own flesh and blood as it was possible to do.

To do him justice, there were times when he struggled hard to perform his duty to his own son, and, after a manner, did it; but, as he had no room in his heart for any other love than that which filled it to overflowing for the lad whose every feature, accent, and expression reminded him of the girl-idol of his youth, it is little wonder that poor Dan bestowed his own affections upon a dog, more especially as the petted, pampered, and thoroughly spoilt favourite of his father had proved himself to be in every way unworthy of even the smallest share of them.

In fact, whenever he didn't require any service from him, George made Dan the butt of his ridicule and of his practical jokes, and as Dan, like most young giants, was good-natured almost to a fault, this, in nine cases out of ten, was a perfectly safe amusement.

But whilst we have been thus introducing the two lads more particularly to our readers, Dan has overcome his brief indignation at the double-barrelled oath which George in his pain and chagrin had discharged at Lubra, and the two are riding along as before, continuing to act well in concert until the huge, onward rolling, and bellowing herd are at last, after almost inconceivable patience, trouble, and difficulty, driven through the narrow entrance into the post-and-rail fenced stock-yard, in which they are at last safely secured; and the work of the day, which had commenced at five in the morning, is thereupon over.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNLUCKY BLOW, A FALSE CHARGE, AND A
CRUEL DESTINY.

NO sooner were the slip-rails put up, and the cattle hemmed in, than Dan said to George, against whom all his animosity had by this time subsided—

"Let us jog down to the creek and have some tucker. I'm pretty well done up, and I can see that your leg is giving you pepper."

"Pretty well for that," answered George, with a smile that would have revealed closely-locked teeth if Dan had taken the trouble to look into his mouth; and then he added, as though he lacked the power to keep the words in, "If that hound was mine I'd have her shot."

"But as she's *not* yours, you'll be good enough not even to waste a black look upon her. Please to remember that if she put you in peril of the bull, her master saved you from the bull, and so rubbed out your score against her."

"Oh, all right—all right. I bear the stupid brute no grudge. Let us push on to the creek, old fellow," answered George Barrington, with a scornful laugh.

So they turned their horses' heads in its direction, and in a few minutes more had gained its welcome shade; where, dismounting, they "short-hoppled" their horses by securing a sort of leather handcuff-looking affair, united by a short chain, around their forelegs, so that they might graze at will and yet be easily caught when wanted; and next, taking down their canvas provision

bags from their saddles, and an old, well-blackened tin billy, or saucepan, which forms the invariable bush tea-kettle and teapot in one, they made their way down to the creek, which, though a deep and rapid stream in the winter-time, was now dried up into a long string of shallow pools, or water-holes, bracketed together by a dry and rocky channel.

But how different-looking were its banks from the scorched-up plain, for acacias and wattles, the latter covered with little seeming puff-balls of gold and silver, drooped to the very water's edge, mingled with the snowy flakes of the gum-flower; whilst beneath their shade lovely heaths and glossy ferns were intermingled with wild thyme and peppermint, and perfect bushes of maidenhair, all springing from a soft, deep carpet of moss.

In this Peri's paradise dry sticks were soon gathered, and a fire lighted. Then Dan Macdonald went down to the creek, filled the old black billy at one of the water-holes, and coming back set it on the fire, where, as soon as it boiled, a fistful of tea was thrown in, and stirred well round and round with a stick, the canvas bags emptied of their contents, which proved to be damper cakes (compounded of flour and water, and baked in the ashes) and some thick slabs of dried beef, that looked not at all unlike chips of mahogany.

Hunger, however, is nowhere so savoury a sauce as in Australia (whose glorious atmosphere defies indigestion), especially after cattle-mustering, so both lads felt like famished wolves, though even under such conditions it was George's habit to toy with his food, for he had a trick of pretending to despise everything, just as though he believed nothing good enough for him.

Dan Macdonald, on the other hand, after placing the

tin billy between them on the ground, for it was to be their drinking-cup as well as their kettle and their pot, drew forth and opened a clasp-knife, and therewith began to cut up and eat his dinner, just as an English farm labourer would do, nathless that his father counted his cattle by hundreds and his sheep by thousands, and owned an estate as large as an English county, with his next-door neighbour living thirty miles away.

So silent were the two lads now,—for George was still as sulky as a bear, and Dan was too proud and too hungry as well to make any attempt towards forcing conversation upon him,—that, as they sat under the shade of a tree fern, whose glorious fronds spread out like a gigantic umbrella some thirty feet above their heads, the birds and insects came forth from their homes in tree and leaf and ground to have a look at them.

And what strange freaks of nature there were amongst them; brown things with big heads and no bodies; green pulps that seemed to be all legs; moving balls that looked like live wattle-blossoms, and caterpillars with seeming twigs of wood growing out of them; all the insects being of the colour of the special foliage on which they feed, a disguise doubtless bestowed on them by Providence in order to protect them from the keen and ravenous gaze of the parroquets, who flitted hither and thither like winged flowers, on the look-out for just such delicacies.

As it happened, and most unfortunately for all concerned, there was another looker-out for delicacies besides the parroquets, in the shape of Lubra, the kangaroo hound, who, despite that her young master often tossed her a mouthful of his own dinner, no sooner beheld Barrington lay down his as yet only nibbled-at

hunk of beef and damper, beside and even almost behind him, than, doubtless deeming stolen bread to be the sweetest, he crept up to and stealthily "boned" the lot.

George glanced round just a second too late to rescue his repast, for which he was ravenously hungering, despite all his assumed indifference, because he thought it vulgar to confess to such a condition.

But it wasn't yet too late to punish the thief, and so, springing to his feet, he caught up the billy of still almost boiling tea, and with clever aim threw nearly the whole of it over the hound.

The poor beast's yell of pain won it a quick revenge, however, for Dan Macdonald was on his feet in a twinkling, and forgetting in his anger and indignation that he still held his open clasp-knife in his right hand, he struck straight out from the shoulder at George Barrington therewith, the result being that he not only felled him to the ground, but also ploughed open his left cheek with the knife-blade for at least a couple of inches, and to the very bone.

George gave vent to a shriek, which astonished his assailant every bit as much as did the appearance of his face as he rolled over in his pain amidst the ferns.

He couldn't at all understand the rush of blood and the agonized ejaculation until he chanced to glance at the still closed fist which had struck the blow, and observed the short, broad, somewhat inward-curved blade of the jack-knife, showing half-an-inch or so of its ugly length thereout.

The making of the discovery and the dashing of the knife in a paroxysm of mingled rage and regret to the ground were simultancous; but before Dan could fling

himself on his knees beside the lad whom he had so unwittingly injured, there to express his poignant regret for the mishap, and to make such amends for it as lay in his rough bush skill, a harsh voice exclaimed, just in rear of him—

“Hullo, young savage, what devil’s trick have you been up to? I saw you fling the knife away, so a lie won’t serve your turn, and if you’ve used it on George there’s not much that will;” and so saying the speaker pushed Dan roughly out of his path, and bending down lifted the other lad tenderly up in his arms.

No sooner had he mopped up some of the blood with his pocket-handkerchief than he perceived the full extent of damage which had been inflicted, and knew that the boy’s beauty (which was inestimably precious to him because it so faithfully recalled to his memory that of the once lovely girl who had been the idol of his youth, and whose loss had soured his disposition for ever) was marred and destroyed beyond recovery.

The knowledge made him furious, and he exclaimed in a voice hoarse and tremulous with passion—

“If Dan did this, knowing what he was about, I have only one son left, and you are he. I will never look upon the young butcher’s face again—no, never; I swear it—nor shall he look on mine.”

“He knew well enough what he was about. I threw a can of tea half-playfully at his dog because the brute had stolen my prog, and he up and attacked me at once like a savage, swearing that he’d do for me, and by Jove he very nearly has,” said George, darting at Dan a covert glance of deep malignity out of the only eye with which he could clearly see.

“Liar!” was the falsely-accused youth’s quick retort;

"you *know* that it was an accident—you cannot even *doubt* it. You know my nature too well to be *able* to doubt it, try as hard as you may; and my father *should* know it too well to believe you."

"You knew what you were about well enough," reiterated George Barrington; "but," he added, "I can forgive you—yes, I both can and *do* forgive you."

"But *I* neither can nor will," said Mr. Macdonald, turning round and glaring furiously at the big, flabby, freckled, and in every respect remarkably plain face of poor Dan, which reminded him so forcibly of the woman whom he had married out of spite the very week after he had been jilted by his idolized beauty, and whom he had loathed ever after, notwithstanding that she had been to him a good and true wife and helpmate in every possible way. "Go," he added, shaking his stock-whip with its coiled-up thong in Dan's face, and hardly able to restrain himself from striking him therewith; "go. Coocinda Station is no longer your home; you have a strong pair of arms, and with them you will be able to earn your own living. You will have to depend upon their doing it too, for you have nothing further to expect from me."

"Do you really believe, father, that I stabbed George intentionally with a knife, and intending to do him a serious injury?" asked Dan, almost appealingly.

"He says so, and I do believe him. Aye, and I should feel precious sure of it, even had he held his tongue," responded Mr. Macdonald, with brutal coarseness.

"Then," said Dan, with a strange blending of grief and pride in his tone, "so long as you believe such a thing as *that* of me, I could not accept any assistance

from you, sir, even were it offered. For the rest, I suppose I can't be going far wrong if I obey my parent's orders; and believe me, that any hardships will be more welcome to me than living any longer under the same roof that sheltered a contemptible wretch like him!" And with a nod to his parent, and a contemptuous glance cast at that parent's most unworthy favourite, Dan Macdonald turned to Lubra with—"We'll hie us away, old girl, to where we are better appreciated;" and striding off towards his stock-horse, he caught it, took off its hopples, pocketed them, tightened up the girths, vaulted into the saddle, and started off at a gallop, ignorant and heedless as to what course he was taking.

He drew rein, however, when he chanced to find himself abreast of and quite near to the Home Station, a large, straggling, one-storied, weather-board mansion, surrounded by a wide verandah, that was covered and festooned with honeysuckle and great bell-mouthed convolvuli, and approached by a flight of steps tastefully balustraded, whilst French windows, adorned with lace curtains, could be just distinguished between the greenery, and a little way in the rear of the house a small township of stables, stores, offices, poultry-yards, piggeries, and other outbuildings gleamed, white as snow with limewash, between the quivering, vertical, sage-green foliage of the fever-banishing blue gum-trees.

Dan Macdonald's eyes filled with tears as he gazed thus unexpectedly upon what, until that moment, had been his home; but they were caused by the memory of the fond mother who had once made it such a happy one, rather than by any regret concerning what had just taken place between himself and his father, who

from infancy upwards had never made even the most languid and half-hearted attempt to win his son's affections, and who, therefore, had very naturally never possessed them.

Dan Macdonald now raised his hat to the memory which rendered Cooinda still sacred to him; and then, obeying a sudden impulse, headed his horse in the direction of the quiet little bush cemetery, which held his beloved mother's remains, for it struck him that it would be a more natural leave-taking of home *there*, than in the mansion which for so many years now had ceased to know her, but had sheltered in her place the offspring of a woman whose desertion of him, it was said, had changed his father's whole nature, and whose memory had made him so harsh and cruel a husband to Dan's mother.

CHAPTER III.

THE BUSH CEMETERY.—ON THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD.

DAN didn't pull up until the cemetery was reached—a couple of acres of white-washed post-and-rail fenced-in ground in the centre of a little valley, where the small wooden crosses and the pathetically suggestive green mounds which they had consecrated, were drooped over by the long white blossoms of the acacia, and the golden tufts of the wattle, and framed, as it were, by pink, crimson, and purple heaths, whilst fanned by the zephyr-stirred fronds of maiden-hair fern bushes.

Dan secured his nag to the fence, and, followed by Lubra, entered the little solitary enclosure with a heavy enough heart, yet stepping warily the while, for such spots frequently shelter the very deadliest of our Australian snakes.

Our hero had little suspicion that he was followed and watched, yet no sooner had he done what he had come there to do, and turned his back upon his mother's grave, than he heard the whinny of a strange horse answered by his own, and caught the gleam of a red, loosely-fluttering shirt between the gloomy fronds of the shea-oak and iron-bark trees that bounded the cemetery on one side.

"My father has sent some one after me to bring me back," was his first thought, and the impression was strengthened when, on jumping over the post-and-rail fence, he saw that the red shirt pertained to Ned Joyce the overseer, who, wearing a very troubled countenance the while, was cutting up a plug of "Barrett's Twist" to fill his myall-wood pipe with.

Ned Joyce was a high-booted, moleskin-breeched, Garibaldi-shirted, bare-throated, much-bearded Irishman, of a most ferocious aspect, and report had it that he was an "old lag" or convict, and in a former state of life had been a gentleman, and a very fine one to boot.

Whether the gossip was true or no, there was not much of the gentleman in the appearance of Ned Joyce now, but very much of the ruffian in its stead; notwithstanding which he had always liked Dan Macdonald, and Dan Macdonald had always liked him.

"Well, lad, and so you're going to take the old 'un at his word?" said Joyce interrogatively.

"Yes, Ned ; it is written, 'Children, obey your parents,' and I don't think there was any possibility of my mistaking the commands of mine," answered our hero bitterly.

"It's also written, young man, that 'a soft answer turneth away wrath,' if I remember my Sunday-school teaching correctly," retorted Joyce, half superciliously ; "wasn't it worth your while to follow *that* counsel ?"

"I should have been a mean-spirited cur had I done so under such provocation ; and do you think so ill of me as to suppose that I could ever live again under the same roof with a fellow who as good as accused me of attempting to murder him, when he must have known—aye, and *did* know—that I meant no more than to give him a good, honest, knock-down blow for his brutality to the dog, and serve him jolly well right, too ?" said Dan.

"There's a cross in his breed which will surely land him in Queer Street some day ; and the only pity about it is, that there's no knowing how many much more worthy folks he may contrive to dispatch to that undesirable locality first. He'll be a dangerous companion to your father, will George Barrington."

"Joyce, what on earth can you be thinking of ?" exclaimed Dan, impelled to laughter at what seemed to him the highly ludicrous notion of his loud-voiced, boastful, bullying, and herculean-framed father (at the sound of whose footstep he had himself often trembled) being in any danger from George Barrington, whom he had been accustomed to regard with a patronizing kind of contempt, feeling the while that he could fight and thrash him with one hand tied behind his back.

"I'm thinking, Master Dan, that little snakes are in

nine cases out of ten a deal deadlier than big ones, and that they're all the more dangerous because inexperienced and thoughtless folks aren't half so likely to run away from them," was Joyce's somewhat oracular answer.

"Well, I've always thought that my precious second cousin was a *snake in the grass*, but it would take a great deal of convincing to make me believe that he was in any way dangerous, except as regards his false and lying tongue, and I can't see what my father has to fear from *that*."

"I wouldn't like to stand in your father's shoes after he'd cut you off with a penny, and made a will giving the young villain everything;—that is to say, after he knew such to be the case—I wouldn't; and your father is quite fool enough to do both things, and then to glory in the telling."

"What, do you think he'd be ungrateful villain enough to attempt to make away with his benefactor in order the more quickly to seize upon his generous bequests? Bah, Ned, I have no fear of that; for, first of all, I can't believe that even George would be quite so wicked; and secondly, I am still more certain that he would never have the courage to use either lead, steel, or poison, no matter how great his greed and his impatience grew."

"There's more ways of killing a bull besides tickling him to death. But I don't want to frighten you needlessly, Master Dan. You are downright determined to leave Cooinda, I suppose?"

"Straight away, Joyce. I've a willing heart and a pair of strong arms, and so there's no fear of my being unable to earn a living in this great, free, prosperous land of ours. I tell you, that the first bit of my father's bread that I attempted to swallow after what he said

just now would choke me, more especially with George Barrington looking on. I couldn't bring myself to re-enter the house where *my* mother suffered so much on *his* mother's account, even to help myself to a change of clothes. There are wounds, Ned, that time alone will heal, and that, even when healed, will always leave a scar."

"Well, lad, I can't say that I don't admire your spirit, but there's one or two things that I want you to promise me before you go. One is, always to keep me acquainted with where you are to be found, at short notice, if required; and another is that you will come home—well, I won't say home, as it seems to make you wince—but to my hut at the Three Mile Creek, should I ever write you that—that—that for justice's sake and for mercy's sake it *must* be done. Talking of writing, who told young George that *I* could write?"

"I may have done so, but if I did I can't recollect it. Was there any harm in so doing?"

"I'd have been thankful if you hadn't, and I think it must have been you, because I don't believe that any one else at Cooinda ever caught me in the act. It has been an accursed accomplishment in my case, as yet. But enough of all that. For the present, I only want an answer to my two requests."

"Since you seem to make such a point of it, I'll answer them both in the affirmative, though I can't see how it's at all probable that I shall ever have to come to you either for justice or for mercy's sake."

"Sufficient for each day is the evil and the good thereof. You have promised to come if needed, and I know that your word is to be relied on, and it will be for another's sake, not for your own; always remember

that. And now, as a wilful lad will, I suppose, have his own way, if a small matter of money will help you along, I've at the present time more than I've any need for—more, in fact, than I know what to do with, and if you will, you will more likely than not save me from going on the burst, and knocking it down at the 'Emu,' or some other bush shanty."

"You're too steady a man to do such a thing as that, Joyce, and I'm in no need of money, thank you most sincerely all the same. I've enough about me for present needs, and the quicker that I'm downright driven to work for my living, the sooner I'll have an antidote against present misery, for hard labour is the very best physic for a sorrowing heart."

The good-natured overseer still strove hard to make Dan accept of, at all events, a temporary loan, but the youth firmly declined it, and, to cut the matter short, hurriedly took his leave by urging his horse to a gallop, waving his farewells as he dashed across the plain.

And after returning them as long as they continued, Ned shook his head, heaved a sigh, remounted, and rode homewards.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH DAN HAS MANY AND STRANGE ADVENTURES.

CHAMPAGNE or a headlong, break-neck gallop will raise the spirits from even the deepest state of despondency with about an equal degree of success; but though the latter panacea is the more manly and the least hurtful of the two, it has the misfortune of being equally evanescent in its effects; so that when Dan Macdonald, out of mercy to his steed, at last suffered it to subside into a walk, he began for the first time to feel what it really was to be utterly alone in the world, and to sink suddenly from a condition of affluence into one in which he would have to labour hard for even his daily bread.

So engrossing, although unpleasant, was the theme, that Dan never noticed that his horse had come to a perfect standstill on the top of a little knoll, and was cropping away at some almost green grass (which was doubtless a treat to him after the dry herbage of the sun-scorched plain), until his attention was suddenly attracted by the gorgeous colours of the sunset, which piled masses of violet and gold above the crimson horizon in the west, bathing the tops of the dark trees with its reflected radiance.

A great mountain range just caught the rays of the sinking, apparent globe of fire, and bars of gold, lightly veiled by violet clouds, seemed to rest on the summit of the dense, dreary, yet grand eucalypti forest that clothed its sides and crowned its rounded top, from

whence two giant arms of pink spread abroad, stretching across the sky, with a delicate curve of palest blue lying between them, and causing that portion of the heavens to look like some sunny reach of water enclosed within a coral reef.

To Dan Macdonald, however, the seeming gigantic arms suggested the idea that they were those of his heavenly Father stretched forth to protect and to uphold him, and such an effect had the impression upon his mind, that he sprang out of his saddle, and, falling upon his knees, prayed as perhaps he had never prayed before.

The prayer, and the gush of relieving tears which accompanied it, did him an immense deal of good, so that when he had remounted he rode on almost cheerfully, though, all the same, by no means decided in which direction to go, or in what way he would first attempt to get his living.

In this uncertain state of mind he allowed his horse to be the chooser of his course, or very nearly so, for he was prompt enough to check any tendency on the part of the animal to return to the fleshpots of Egypt, which in this case were represented by the well-filled corn-bins of the Cooinda stables.

Perhaps this being the case, all other directions were indifferent to the animal, for it ambled and galloped by turns (a trot being an unknown pace in the bush, and not a very favourite one anywhere in Australia), entertaining an apparent penchant for showing its young master all the curiosities of Nature in that special region, as though he hadn't seen most of them a score of times before.

So it took its rider across the track of a hurricane,

which a couple of years previously had chosen its own path through the forest, uprooting the strongest trees and laying them flat in its course, which for miles and miles it made of the almost uniform breadth of a hundred yards, leaving the most fragile flowers unharmed that grew close upon the edges of its devastating rush.

Then the good steed swept through the *valley of cannon-balls*, as it is locally called, because all through it are thickly-strewn stone globes, as large and as round as those that surmount the pedestals of so many English old country mansion gateways; here formed evidently by the hand of Nature, but how, why, or from what material, puzzling the geologist as much as the most ignorant.

The forest left behind, and dense patches of Mallee scrub, that stretched for miles and leagues away to the left, avoided by the instinct of the stock-horse, even as it is by that of most living things except snakes, a broad billowy-looking plain is once more reached, dotted, as is mostly the case, with white-trunked gums, whose foliage looks positively black, flooded, as they by this time are, with the silvery light of the newly-risen moon, which gleams like a vast silver shield from out a sky of darkest indigo blue, all jewel-bossed with stars, amidst which the glorious constellation of the Southern Cross gleams in all its wondrous beauty.

Now the lugubrious chuckle of the laughing jackass begins to be heard; locusts hum with a sound like the whirr of very distant machinery in all the trees, and that Brobdignagian bat, the flying fox, flits through the air with a heavy, resonant flapping of its leathery pinions.

But what are those huge round things—one, two, three—as big as English haycocks, that come bounding before the newly-risen breeze across the plain, as though they were running a race? As they draw nearer the horse and rider they show green of colour, and seem to be composed solely of vegetable matter, whilst they are evidently of extraordinary lightness for their size, their resemblance to that strange little marine animal, the sea-urchin, being apparent.¹

Their course is erratic and frequently changes. Presently one comes hopping and bounding right past Dan's horse, brushing its nose in the act, whereat the terrified animal snorts, wheels half round, rears on end, and throws its rider (who, thinking deeply of other matters, is quite unprepared for such conduct) heavily to the ground; immediately thereafter, finding itself at length a free agent, making back tracks for Cooinda, even though it is by this time some thirty-five miles distant.

Dan Macdonald was stunned by the fall, for he had pitched heavily on his head, but his return to consciousness was quickened by Lubra (the innocent occasion of all his troubles) licking his face and hands with her warm, moist tongue, so that he soon recovered his senses, though only to discover that he would have to continue his wanderings on foot, and that the only friend left him was his faithful hound.

This conviction caused him to think that he had not behaved nearly so well to that friend as he should have

¹ And urchins they are called. The author has seen them frequently in Queensland, and once knew what they were. At present he can't remember with certainty, but thinks that they are formed by the coagulated seeds of some flower.

done; therefore he determined to go no further that night, but to camp under the nearest tree, light a fire, see if something couldn't be obtained for supper, and afterwards some healing leaves found, which, when reduced to pulp, would form an emollient poultice for the hound's scalded and blistered back, though the hurt wasn't nearly so bad as Dan had at first feared.

Well, the materials for a fire are at all times quickly procured in the bush, and so a right cheery one was soon blazing, for an Australian youth always smokes at sixteen, and consequently carries a match-box in his pocket.

Finding a supper was a much more difficult matter; but Dan presently espied a hole high up in the trunk of an iron-bark tree, and as it looked a likely enough abode for an opossum, he climbed it with the agility of a monkey, or a "black fella," thrust in an arm, caught hold of something hairy, pulled it quickly forth in order to avoid being bitten, and for the same reason whirled it rapidly round and round in the air, finally giving it a hearty crack against the tree trunk, and then dropping it to the ground.

When he had descended himself, he found that his prize was a fine plump 'possum, whose skull he had cracked in, and which consequently was quite dead.

How he wished now that he hadn't dropped his jack-knife to the ground, after inadvertently almost killing his rascally cousin therewith, for had he been possessed of it he could have skinned and cleaned the little animal before cooking it, whereas he was now reduced to the necessity of roasting it just as it was.

He thought that he would be hungry enough to eat

it dressed in any way, but he found that when the meal was ready he couldn't stomach it at all, though Lubra did not prove so fastidious, and left nothing of the 'possum save its skin.

As for Dan, he found some native cherries whilst in quest of the leaves that he wanted for Lubra's poultice, and contrived to make a sorry supper upon them, chewing a quid of tobacco afterwards, which, he had somewhere read, was very soothing to the stomach, though *he* found it to be exactly the reverse.

However, he laid himself down to sleep under the iron-bark tree, an example which Lubra imitated, though a good deal nearer to the fire, and at sunrise both boy and dog woke up as fresh as daisies, and as ready for fresh fatigues as though they had not encountered any on the day previous.

It would be tedious to accompany our hero step by step through all his wanderings. He did not find remunerative work so soon or so easily as he had expected. The sheep-shearing season was over, on which account many others besides himself were seeking employment. At one station it is true he was offered a situation as a shepherd, at forty pounds a year and his rations, but Dan felt that with no pleasanter thoughts than he possessed, and no other society from week's end to week's end than that of sheep, that, even with Lubra added thereto, such a berth would fit him for nothing except a lunatic asylum, and so it was declined.

Now and then he got a day or two's work at some "Cockatoo Squatters," as small farmers are called in Australia, and at bush huts he was always welcome to a meal and a "shake-down" for the sake of his

company, for even the sight of a human being is a boon to the dwellers in these dreary abodes.

On one occasion he passed three whole days with the blacks, and learned how to kill snakes, aye, and to cook and eat them as well.

All this while he was getting further and further away from Cooinda, for nothing could ever induce him to go "back on his tracks." But his wandering, idle, and as yet aimless life became more wearisome to him day by day; and so it was with a gasp of relief that on the twenty-first of his pilgrimage he suddenly came in sight, at the bottom of an extensive valley, one of whose surrounding hills he had just climbed, of a gold diggings, which bore every appearance of having been very recently a "new rush."

Tents, grog-shanties, hastily run-up wooden stores, and mia-mias made of upright sticks supporting great slabs of bark, were scattered in all directions on each side of a yellow winding creek, that was astonishingly full of water for the time of year; whilst the ground, trodden perfectly bare of grass by the many feet that were constantly traversing it, was dotted everywhere with holes, many still so shallow that the heads of the workers were visible above their margins, whilst a pretty accurate guess could be made of the depth of the others by the height and the circumference of the pile of earth that had been thrown out of each.

In one direction a well-worn Union Jack floated above the tent of the Police Commissioner, whilst a red flag, embroidered with a sprawling "V.R.," marked the position of the little wooden post-office. Dan Macdonald noticed these things as, with buoyant step, he ascended the hillside, longing to take part in so busy a

scene, and wondering how he could manage to do so with no money left to buy a claim, and a licence to dig therein, or even the pick and spade which would be required for that purpose.

But Dame Fortune had made up her mind to befriend our hero on this occasion, or, at all events, it seemed very like it; for at the very first hole he came to Dan heard a sound of groaning at the bottom, and looking down, he descried a man, who moaned out—

“Hang my impatience, mate, for it’s let drop a hundredweight of earth upon my legs, and I’m pinned down like a butterfly on a cork. Just when my luck seemed to be taking a turn too!”

The hole was only about nine feet deep, so Dan was down to the man’s rescue in no time, when five minutes sufficed to relieve him of the weight of earth upon his legs, and yet another five to hoist him on to his own shoulders, and heave him upwards to the surface.

As Dan, after clambering out of the hole, discovered that the man couldn’t raise himself on to his feet, he carried him to his tent, which was close by, laid him down on his blanket, and forthwith attended, as well as he was able, to his hurts.

“Here’s a go!” exclaimed the poor fellow, when he realized the fact that in all probability, owing to his bruises and his sprains, he wouldn’t be able to get to work again for nearly a week. “Somebody ’ull jump the claim. The law allows anybody to take possession of a hole that hasn’t been worked for eight-and-forty hours; and I saw the gold—I know that I saw the gold. Oh, that I had a partner! Young man, I’ve had proof that you’re strong, and your face looks honest, so will *you* be my partner—share and share

alike, whatever's found in the claim? I want to save it from being jumped, don't you see."

"I shall be very glad to be your partner, and there's my hand on it," responded Dan Macdonald thankfully. "You must admit my dog into the partnership too, though," he added; "and you may clinch the bargain by giving us both something to eat."

CHAPTER V.

DAN IN IMMINENT HAZARD OF EXCHANGING GOLD FOR LEAD.

THE compact was sealed, and the compact was carried out. For a while the digger, whose name was Mark Fallon, seemed, and perhaps also was, extremely grateful for the "perfect godsend," as he almost invariably persisted in calling Dan, and who, for that matter, almost deserved the title, for not only did he preserve Fallon's claim from being "jumped," but for a while worked it with the energy of two men, for he had caught the gold fever, and that enables even a youth to do wonders—whilst it's on him.

Notwithstanding all that, however, he tended the injured digger with the skill of a surgeon, united to the tenderness of a woman—cooked his food, made his bed for him, cleaned up the place, and scoured the saucepans, the iron plates, and the tin pannikins as they had assuredly never been scoured before. He also buried the gold that had been dug up in such artful

places as even Mark Fallon was compelled to own he should never have thought of himself.

"Aye, keep it dark, lad—no blabbing—there ain't many on Warrigal Flat as are doing like we're doing; but, on t'other hand, there are precious many as would cut our throats to rob us of a single day's find, and with as little scruple as they'd slit a pig's," he observed on one occasion; and Dan had already seen enough of the diggings to find no difficulty in crediting what his mate said.

Lubra, however, was a capital guard to the tent of a night-time, for though a broad bald patch on her back, as the result of the tea scald, militated against her beauty, it was no drawback to her utility; and with her gaunt, greyhound-shaped form, her long, shaggy, wiry, blue-grey hair, and her formidable ranges of fangs, she was about as ugly-looking a customer as even the most daring night-fossicker would venture to tackle.

But, despite the services of both youth and hound, Mark Fallon had no sooner recovered the use of his limbs and his accustomed strength to labour, than he began to bitterly regret at heart that he was saddled with a partner.

"Double rations to pay for, and half-profits instead of whole ones," he would often mutter to himself, with an oath which perhaps was all the deeper because it wasn't uttered aloud; for Mark was a mean-spirited cur, and as stunted in mind as he was in form, so that he didn't dare to offend the tall, strapping youth by even so much as an audible grumble.

No; he smiled instead, resolving within himself the while that when there was sufficient to be gained by it, and the thing was perfectly safe to do, he'd *murder* him.

Well, weeks and even months slipped away, and sometimes the partners were fortunate for a spell, and sometimes they worked on for days at a time without finding so much as a single grain of the precious metal. But the intervals of bad luck excited them, just as heavy losses do gamblers at *roulette* or *rouge et noir*, and made them work all the harder and more eagerly, in order the quicker to bring about a pleasanter state of things.

On the whole they did well—wonderfully well. Their claim was undoubtedly one of the very best on Warrigal Flat, and both of them should have been even more than satisfied; but though Dan Macdonald's heart glowed at the conviction, that ere long he would have secured enough of the precious metal to render him independent for life, Mark Fallon grew more selfish, dissatisfied, and dangerous day by day, so that with each succeeding week poor Dan's life was in greater jeopardy owing to his mate's murderous greed.

Matters were in this state when Dan one day received a letter from Ned Joyce, the overseer at Cooinda, whom, according to promise, he had kept acquainted with his whereabouts. The missive ran as follows—

“DEAR MASTER DAN,

“That which I so much feared has come to pass. If you would save your father's life and your own inheritance, lose no time in returning home, no matter how profitable the pursuit in which you are at present engaged.

“Yours most faithfully and truly,

“N. JOYCE.”

The brief epistle caused our hero as much puzzlement

as it did pain. Why couldn't Joyce have been more explicit? And what if the alarm should be a mere mare's nest after all? he thought to himself. He couldn't even guess wherein his father's danger could possibly lie, or what shape the vaguely hinted at peril could take.

It was a summons, however, that he did not dare to refuse; which, indeed, he had no inclination to refuse, when he had once convinced himself that after all there might be some real cause for alarm. He therefore lost no time in informing his mate that there was something seriously the matter with his father, and that therefore he was going to take himself off home at once; but he added that doubtless he shouldn't be long away, and that when he returned to Warrigal Flat he'd work double hard in order to make up for lost time.

"You've done double work whilst I've lain idle, so it's my place to do the work of the two, and without grumbling, whilst you're away," was Mark Fallon's retort; and then he added, "I suppose you'll be taking some of your share of the spoil with you, eh, matey?"

"Yes, I think that I'd better, for it'll be safer at Cooinda than here," responded Dan, thinking the while that it would be in every way pleasanter to return to his father's house rich and independent, rather than in the character of the prodigal son, since he was by no means the kind of parent who would kill the fatted calf on such an occasion, whilst wealth would assuredly win his respect, and perhaps a genial welcome as well.

Fallon declared that Dan's resolution was a wise one, but he hated him for it nevertheless, and resolved that at all events he shouldn't carry the gold with him very

far; coming to the conclusion, also, that there would be no great danger to himself in waylaying and murdering him, because there were so many thorough-paced rascals in camp that one would be as likely to get the credit of having committed the crime as another.

So Dan took some gold dust and small nuggets to the tent of one of the licensed buyers, and there had it weighed and changed for coin of the realm, and with a portion of the proceeds bought a horse, saddle, bridle, and revolver, with plenty of cartridges to charge it with, and last, but by no means least, good strong leather bags to contain his treasure, constructed so as to be attached one on each side of the saddle pommel, like pistol holsters. Needless to say he didn't explain what the bags were for.

Mark Fallon looked at and approved of all that he had done, but seemed to be very much put out at Dan's declaration that he should take Lubra with him.

"You will be depriving me of my best protector," he stammered; but Dan retorted that he loved his dog more than he did any one or anything else in the world, that they had never been parted since it was a pup, and a good deal more to the same effect. So perceiving that he couldn't shake his mate's determination, Mark sullenly gave in, though he didn't at all like the prospect of having to tackle both youth and hound, and would much rather have started on his expedition with the comforting knowledge that huge, gaunt Lubra was left behind, securely tied up in the tent.

However, there seemed to be no help for it, so when night came, the gold (both nuggets and dust) was disinterred from its various "plants," and as equitably

divided as was possible without the assistance of scales, Dan cheerfully allowing every doubtful point to be decided against himself; and then he went forth to attend to the saddling of his nag, imprudently leaving his revolver, which he had just loaded in every chamber, behind him, atop of the empty and inverted rum keg, thus affording his treacherous mate the opportunity of drawing the charges, and rendering the weapon innocuous, whilst it looked as reliable and as deadly as ever to Dan, when he returned into the tent to wish Fallon "good-bye and good luck," and to thrust it into his belt.

But Mark did more than draw the charges out of the revolver, for he contrived to pick Dan's pocket of his store of reserve cartridges as well, and so sent him forth and sped him on his way quite powerless for harm as far as he personally was concerned, whatever Lubra might be able to effect on his behalf.

No sooner was he gone than Mark Fallon rushed back into the tent, thrust his own revolver into his broad digger's belt, and the next minute he was bounding up the steep hillside at the back, with almost the agility of a kangaroo.

He knew well enough the route that his boy partner was bound to follow, and that he must make a considerable detour on horseback to reach a point therein which he himself could gain on foot across the hills in considerably less time.

At that point of the road, too, there was a little patch of tea-tree scrub, that would make a capital ambush in which to lie in wait for his prey, and from whence to bestow "three bullets on the dog, and three on the rider."

CHAPTER VI.

"HE WHO SUPS WITH THE DEVIL MUST USE A LONG SPOON."

WE will now return to Cooinda Station, in order to discover what has been occurring there, and what made Ned Joyce, the overseer, write so urgent a letter to Dan Macdonald. As we shall have very much to tell, we must do it in as few words as possible.

When, on the occasion of their parting, Joyce had declared to our hero that George Barrington would be a dangerous companion for his father, after the latter had once made a will in his favour, he had pretty clearly foreseen that such a will would be made, and had also accurately guessed how George would speed on the quick decease of his benefactor afterwards.

Always a man of sudden impulses, no sooner did Mr. Macdonald discover that young Barrington's beauty was for ever destroyed by his son's knife—the beauty that was so much like that of a girl, and moreover of the only girl whom he had ever loved, and whose bare memory was almost an idolatry with him—than the will was made; and George was, furthermore, told as a balm for his sufferings, which for a week or two were rather severe, that he was henceforth the heir of Cooinda, that Dan was cut off with a shilling, and that for the future he would have no other son but him.

Of course George expressed his gratitude as well as he was able, which was very well indeed, for the gift of the gab was the only gift, except his good looks, that

Nature had bestowed upon him; so that he'd always been able to say a dozen words to Dan's one, ever well chosen, whilst Dan's were as frequently as not a blunder.

There can be no doubt but that George really did feel grateful to his benefactor for at least a week, or perhaps even a month, but then he began to reflect how much more gracious it would be of the squatter to die and leave him Cooinda and all its wealth in sheep, cattle, and what not, without any unnecessary loss of time. As for murder he had no heart for *that*, but he knew very well that there was a weapon, with "the handle towards his hand," which Mr. Macdonald would lose no time in killing *himself* with.

When George's mother had jilted him, long years ago, the now squatter had sought relief in wine; and when, later on, his wife had died (slain by his neglect, and cold, undisguised contempt), a paroxysm of remorse, that came all too late, had driven him to brandy for comfort. From that time forth the Drink Fiend had visited him whenever there was the slightest chance of his being welcomed, and on each occasion his unfortunate host had been more and more tardy in showing him the door. George Barrington knew of this; knew that Dan, at his father's request, had kept the key of the wine and spirit room, and never used it, by his father's desire, except when bush hospitality, in the case of visitors, rendered it compulsory.

Both Dan and George had been brought up as strict abstainers, Mr. Macdonald often declaring that he would rather follow them to their graves than even see them become moderate drinkers, for he hated the tempter who was always at his elbow, and knew that he never

could have obtained such an influence over him had he not in the first instance invited his acquaintance.

And now that tempter was to have an ally in George Barrington, for he was trusted with the key of the wine and spirit room just as Dan had been, and Mr. Macdonald charged him to lock away therein even what was decanted, as soon as ever visitors had taken their departure, and not to trust the key for a single instant out of his own possession.

The squatter's temples were bedewed with perspiration, and there was a kind of hunted look in his eyes whilst he issued these directions.

"He is reproaching himself for the way he has treated Dan, so now is the time or never; besides, regret may lead to forgiveness, and where should I be then?" reflected George to himself.

Eagerly he awaited a favourable opportunity of putting his plot into execution, and it came that very day.

Mr. Macdonald's next-door neighbour, a squatter living twenty-five miles away, came over in a towering passion to discuss the question of Free Selection, which was just beginning to agitate the colony, and stir up the bile of the entire squatting interest, and this added to Mr. Macdonald's worry of mind considerably.

Feeling that his secret enemy was standing closer to his elbow than usual, he bade George be very careful that a decanter of toast-and-water, labelled sherry, should be placed next him during dinner, and one of pure water, labelled Hollands, during dessert, so that "he might seem to be doing the hospitable without the necessity of taking anything that would impair his digestion," for that was the way in which his self-respect induced him to put it to his adopted son; and not to

drink glass for glass with your guest, was at that time considered in Australia as the very essence of inhospitality, and even incivility.

Well, the toast-and-water was all right, but with dessert George made the intentional mistake of placing a decanter of real Hollands at his benefactor's elbow.

At the first taste he bestowed upon his adopted son a glance in which absolute terror was mingled with reproach, but George made pretence not to observe it, and looked as innocent and free from guile as any lamb frisking on the hill-side.

Mr. Macdonald was constrained by the laws of politeness to finish his glass, but when he had done so he no longer felt any desire that the next should be water, for the terrible craving had by that time taken possession of him afresh, and his only regret soon was that his visitor was only a moderate drinker, and that when he declared that he would have no more, "good form" forbade him from going on drinking himself.

But George Barrington continued his wilful mistake by leaving out the unfinished decanter of Hollands, whilst he sedulously locked all the rest away, the one containing the pure water included, and when Mr. Macdonald came back indoors and discovered what his *protégé* had done, he chuckled with delight, and raising the decanter to his lips drained it to the last drop.

The Drink Fiend had him no longer as a mere antagonist, but grovelling under his feet as a victim. That night, with the craving stronger than ever on him, he stole into George's bedroom, and felt in all the pockets of his cast-aside clothing for the key of the wine and spirit store, obtaining which he crept out of the chamber, went straight thereto, laid hold of a

brandy bottle, carried it off in triumph to the dining-room, adroitly struck off the neck (colonial fashion) with the back of a knife, and gleefully resigned himself to a solitary orgie.

The next morning he was discovered lying on the sofa, clasping an empty bottle to his chest, his hands torn and bleeding, his eyes wild and bloodshot, and shrieking out that devils were all around him, and that all night long they had been setting black cats at him to tear his eyes out. Then he begged them to drag from off him the huge toad, as big as a mill-stone, that was sitting on his chest and spitting poison into his mouth, and straightway commenced to shriek and to scream afresh, as though he was under the torture.

He was, in fact, a victim to the "horrors," that awful madness produced by drink, in which the very tortures and terrors of hell seem to be endured by the miserable victim, and which in England is more mildly entitled *delirium tremens*.

Once reduced to this condition, the erst strong, healthy, iron-willed man was soft and plastic as clay in the potter's hand, for George to do what he would with. George, of course, sent off to the nearest bush township for a doctor, and the doctor brought round his patient for the time, but told George, whose devoted attention and apparent affection for the sick man much impressed him in the youth's favour, that he could cure him on this occasion, though another such attack must prove fatal.

But with one wishful and even eager to bring it about, how was a recurrence of the malady to be avoided? George made a great show of keeping the temptation out of his way, but on this occasion Mr.

Macdonald never recovered sufficient command over himself to even fight against his besetting sin, as he had always done before.

He would, indeed, often petition his adopted son for just one glass of spirit; and George, after pretending to stand out, always yielded—indeed, how now could he help yielding? He had already done the devil's work, and the devil could now at last do very well without him. It was too late to undo the mischief he had wrought, even had he attempted it.

There were many, therefore, at Cooina Station who acquitted him of all blame in the matter; indeed, it would have been a difficult thing to have discovered any one who did not, save and except Ned Joyce, the overseer, upon whom it flashed from the very first (though he could not have explained how or why), that by this very method George Barrington would contrive to destroy his benefactor, and make himself the owner of Cooina and a fortune of some forty-five thousand pounds a year.

He felt assured that Dan's return could alone save him his inheritance and his father his life; but when he came to look for Dan's letter containing his address he could not find it, nor did he for weeks after, and by that time it was very problematical whether it was not too late for a warning to do the least good to anybody, for there was every symptom about the poor squatter that another attack of the "horrors" was close upon him, in which case not only his days, but his very hours, would be numbered.

He, however, sent the warning off, hoping that it might do *some* good, and little guessing that it would have the effect of leading his young favourite a great

deal nearer to death's door than was even—at all events, at the period of its despatch—his wretched father.

Yet were the stars in their courses fighting against Sisera. There is no accounting for the actions of a madman, and he who is once clutched by the "horrors" is a madman to all intents and purposes.

Whilst his second attack was as yet in embryo, Mr. Macdonald took a sudden and violent aversion to the youth whom he had hitherto loved dearer than any son. No one perceived this aversion but its object, but *his* keen perceptions were particularly open to such a change of sentiment; so much might possibly depend upon it.

Hurt his feelings it did not, for he had none; but alarm him it very naturally did, and it caused him to watch his benefactor as a hungry cat might watch a remarkably sleek mouse.

But as there are places into which such a cat cannot pursue such a mouse, so there were places in which George could not at all times follow Mr. Macdonald; for, knowing how he was now regarded, he had no longer the courage to thwart his will.

So when one day the squatter cursed him (perhaps because in his madness he could read the lad's bad, black heart more truthfully than when he was sane, a maniac's perceptions being wonderfully shrewd and accurate in some things), and afterwards rushed into his bedroom and locked the door behind him, George could only kneel down and peer through the keyhole at what he was about.

He saw quite enough, however, to fill him with agonized despair, for Mr. Macdonald took out of a

drawer a document which George could perceive was indorsed "will," and proceeded to tear it into the smallest shreds, thereafter making them into a little heap in the fender, and applying to them a lighted match.

George knew full well that the act made him a beggar, and that when his benefactor died, as in a few weeks, perhaps days, he probably would, his only son Dan would inherit everything as his heir-at-law, so that all his scheming and all his sin would not benefit him a single tittle.

Little did he guess, however, whilst thus giving way to despair, that a new weapon would presently be offered to his hand, and that he might yet be able to ruin Dan by means of Dan's best friend.

CHAPTER VII.

NED JOYCE IN A NEW CHARACTER.—A DAY OF STARTLING INCIDENTS.

THE next day was destined to be one of the most startling and varied events. In the first place the "horrors" seized upon the poor squatter in an aggravated and most terrible form, and the doctor was at once sent for to Cooloomurra township, and, on arrival, declared that Mr. Macdonald had not three days to live, for that opiates would have no power over him, and he would die from the exhaustion occasioned by battling with the imaginary fiends and other shapes of terror that beset him.

Two lusty stockmen controlled him as well as they could, and they had to be constantly relieved by others, it required such strength to hold him down, whilst his shrieks of terror could be heard even far away from the house.

As for George Barrington, he wouldn't suffer him to be near him, and thus it was that the villainous young rascal, whilst wandering distractedly about the house, came to overhear what seemed to place position and fortune once more within his grasp.

But we must go back a little, in order to render matters more easily understood.

Just when Mr. Macdonald was at his worst, three mounted troopers arrived at Cooinda Station in charge of a bushranger, whom they had recently captured, and who had for long been a terror to those parts.

They were on their way to Bathurst with him, in order to safely lodge him in the gaol of that city; but the route was a long one, the bush townships were few and far between, and they and their horses being both hungry and weary, they had called at the Cooinda home station in passing for that rest and refreshment which are never refused at such places under such circumstances.

They were received by Ned Joyce, who as overseer had had his office there ever since his master, owing to his vicious indulgences, had been less able to get about than formerly, and in the crotchety fidgetiness occasioned thereby had also required, or thought that he required, to see and consult with him much more frequently; for though Ned had always pretended that he couldn't write, he was a capital manager, and a remarkably shrewd man of business, even as many

English merchants were in the olden time who couldn't so much as sign their names.

Why Ned affected to be unable to write the reader will be able to guess in the course of a very few minutes.

Ned seemed to be very much perturbed by the appearance of one of the visitors, who wore on the sleeve of his short blue tunic the three chevrons of a sergeant, and who in turn had recognized him as an old acquaintance at first sight.

Telling his two subordinates to take the bushranger outside, to guard him securely, and to shoot him if he made an attempt at escape, he, directly they had obeyed him, less the shooting, turned to the overseer with a cheery—

“Well, my hearty, it don't seem to me long ago since we were mates in the chain-gang at Cockatoo Island—you as a lifer, for perhaps the cleverest and most daring forgery ever perpetrated. By George! your escape was just as clever in its way, and made a great stir amongst us. I shouldn't wonder if even now the authorities would give a hundred guineas to know where you are at the present moment.”

“Oh, Adam, have mercy on me and don't peach. I erred under great temptation—heaven alone knows how great; and ever since my escape, six years ago, I have tried to atone for the fault by leading an honest and a useful life. *You* are in a respectable position again, and I congratulate you, so for pity's sake do not envy mine, or try to deprive me of it,” rejoined Ned Joyce, with the great beads of mental agony coming out thick upon his brow.

“Yes,” answered the sergeant, “I got a free pardon

for informing the authorities of a murderous outbreak that my fellow yellow-birds meditated, and then they gave me a situation in the force, on the old principle of set a thief to catch a thief, you know. My ingenuity in that useful art has advanced me to the stripes, as you see, and I'm just thinking of what an extra feather in my cap it would be were I to take you off with me in company with that bushranging fellow."

"Oh, mercy, mercy!" gasped Ned again, falling on his knees. "Are you man or devil? Do you forget how I nursed you in the prison hospital, when you were down with gaol-fever, and no one else would volunteer for the duty?"

"Well, yes, I do remember *that*," said the sergeant, interrupting him; "and as it deserves some gratitude, I'm ready to bestow it for, under the circumstances, a small price. Come, prick up your ears, and listen to my terms. So shrewd a fellow as you are can get at your employer's cheque-book, I make no doubt, and I'm still surer that you could fill up one for three hundred pounds, and sign his name at the bottom of it, in a hand that he wouldn't know from his own; and also that in three days' time he won't be in a condition to know it from his own, for they tell me that by then he will be dead. Come, that cheque is the price of your freedom, and it'll be a safe enough job under the circumstances."

It is painful enough to contemplate the writhings of a worm upon a fish-hook, so we will not dwell upon the sufferings of a poor human creature just as cruelly and effectually impaled.

Vain were his pleadings, his prayers, his supplications. The sergeant was as inexorable as Shylock for

his pound of flesh; and Mr. Macdonald, having no suspicion of a man who he believed couldn't write, had been accustomed to keep his cheque-book in an unlocked drawer in that very room, which he had also frequently used to transact his own special business in.

So, in the end, Ned Joyce purchased his freedom with the self-respect and honour which he had been slowly winning back during the preceding half-dozen years, and an hour later, after eating and drinking of the very best that Cooinda afforded, Sergeant Adams rode away with his bushranger prisoner and his two troopers, and with the three hundred pounds cheque in his pocket, and his mind made up that as soon as ever he'd lodged his man in Bathurst gaol, he'd get leave of absence, take Cobb's coach to Sydney, and cash it at the Bank of Australia before the news should reach so far that the wealthy owner of Cooinda was dead or even dying.

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The police hadn't taken their departure very long when George Barrington entered the room in which Ned Joyce still sat, staring-eyed and open-mouthed, as though a ghost confronted him from an opposite corner, and closing the door, said to him quietly—

"Ned, you've put yourself to some trouble to oblige a friend, and now you must put yourself to a little more to oblige me. Before you refuse, allow me to inform you that yon keyhole has served both my eye and my ear, and made me acquainted with everything; the lesson to be learnt from which is, that you are now every bit as much in my power as in this sergeant's," and so saying he sat down and indulged in a pleasant-sounding little laugh.

Ned Joyce didn't plead for mercy from George Barrington—perhaps he knew that it would not be any good; or, again, perchance he had lost as much self-respect as he *had* to lose. Be that as it may, he simply rejoined—

"The game seems to be yours, Master George, so if you think that I'm the winning card in your hand, play me as you will."

"Spoken like a good sensible fellow," laughed the young reprobate. "I'll tell you pat and plain how the matter stands. My generous benefactor made a will just after his son went away, giving me everything, and I hope you don't mean to deny that a man has a right to do what he likes with his own?"

"Certainly not. It would be very unfair if he couldn't."

"Then I hope you don't mean to assert that a man is accountable for his actions when he's mad?"

"I don't assert or deny anything; I only want to know what you expect me to do?"

"Just to re-write out the will which my generous benefactor made in my favour when he knew what he was about, and destroyed when he didn't, and which bequeathed to me everything that he possessed. I have the testimony of others that you can imitate his signature so well that even he himself wouldn't know it from his own, and the witnesses were Joe Day and Bob Andrews, whose signatures you will be sure to find at the foot of the filed receipts for their last quarter's wages."

"Was the will read out to them before they witnessed it, do you know?"

"Not a word of it. 'Twas folded down, and they

only saw the attestation clauses opposite to which they had to write their names."

"And this was some nine months ago, just after Master Dan went away?"

"Within a week of his departure, and the will gave me everything, cutting him off with a shilling. It didn't fill half a page of foolscap, and was so simple that any one could manufacture a similar one."

"Any one with some experience that way, I suppose you mean?"

"No; I mean any one without such experience. There is a book called *Every Man's Own Lawyer* on yonder shelf. He took his form out of that. Look out the title 'Wills,' and you will find the page turned down to that special form, so that you need not be a word out. Stay, though, you may add half-a-dozen lines to the original, something after this manner—'And I give and bequeath to my overseer, Edward Joyce, as token that I appreciate his six years of most faithful service, the sum of three hundred pounds, to be paid out of my personal estate.' There, old fellow, that'll convince you that I ain't one of the mean sort; added to which, a month after my benefactor's decease I shall raise your salary an extra twenty pounds a year."

"You are generous, and I owe you my best thanks," said Ned Joyce, with an expression in his face that looked like gratified greed if it looked like anything; and so George Barrington read it, construing it to mean that the overseer was bound tightly to his interests.

"You may rely on me," Ned now said, "for you have bought me when you might have sold me. Have no fear but that when the lawyer comes from Cooloomurra to read the will—for I presume that you will go in for

the usual formula—one shall be ready for him that he will be able to find no flaw in; so allow me to congratulate the presently new proprietor of Coocinda upon his truly magnificent possessions;” and rising to his feet, Ned Joyce made the scheming young scoundrel as humble an obeisance as even Uriah Heep could have managed to get out of his most pliable shoulders and backbone.

Directly he had quitted the office, however, the overseer's expression and manner underwent a great change, and almost rushing to one of the many drawers that the room contained, he tore it violently open, and took thereout one of the many reams of foolscap paper that had only arrived the previous day from Sydney.

Opening the packet with trembling fingers, he was presently holding up a sheet of paper to the light, and no sooner had he done so than he muttered to himself, “I will foil him yet. I will make them believe me whether they like it or not. Thank heaven I need not for long continue so mean and contemptible a thing as I felt myself to be half-an-hour ago, when I purchased my freedom with yet another crime. Let me but accomplish this one thing to my satisfaction, and they may send me back to Cockatoo Island as soon as they like—aye, as soon as they like—though it is a perfect hell on earth;” and the overseer sank back half-fainting into a chair.

CHAPTER VIII.

DAN'S RETURN TO COOINDA, AND NED JOYCE'S
ATONEMENT.

ON the morning of the day following the scenes that we have just described Mr. Macdonald died, mainly from the exhaustion caused by his continued ravings. He was not mad at the very end, but was too prostrated in strength to be able to speak intelligibly, though one of his attendants expressed a belief that the last word he uttered was "Dan."

And that very night Dan, in complete ignorance of all that had happened, came home—not to Cooinda, for he was fearful of the manner of the reception that he might meet with there, but to the weatherboard hut of Ned Joyce at the Three-mile Creek, with its broad verandah, half-glass doors, and lean-to kitchen, and which was buried to its very chimney-tops 'neath great purple convolvuli.

The overseer was at home, and came forth with his dogs at his heels, and smoking his usual myall-wood pipe, to welcome the lad whose voice he had instantly recognized.

His involuntary greeting was, "Well, why were you not here before?"

"I consider myself precious lucky to be here *now*, for it's a miracle that I wasn't murdered on the way, as I should have been hadn't Lubra there, scenting danger, I suppose, got in the rear of the man who had six bullets all ready for me, and caught him by the throat ere he

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could discharge a single one. Of all men in the world, he was **my mate** too, whose life I had saved, and whom I had nursed in sickness, and worked beside in the same claim month after month. But enough of him for the present. How's my father? and what on earth is up at Cooinda, that you urged me to return in such a precious hurry?"

"You'd better come inside and have something to eat before I tell you all the news."

"All right, I will; but nag first and self after is bush rule."

"And a very good one too, but I'll see to your nag whilst you see to yourself, so just walk in and make yourself as much at home as you can."

Dan did as he was bidden, wondering the while what made Ned Joyce so grave and taciturn, instead of looking rejoiced to see him, as he had anticipated he would be.

Poor fellow, he soon knew, for though the overseer, when he came in, broke the news as gently as it was in his nature to do, that nature was naturally a rough one, and a landrail can't sing in such dulcet tones as the nightingale.

The intelligence of his father's death was a terrible shock to Dan, notwithstanding that the squatter had never acted as a father towards him; but when our hero asked, half suspiciously, if the conduct of his cousin had in any way hastened his father's decease, the overseer made answer—

"Well, when a man like your father takes to the bottle, it isn't a hobbledehoy such as young George that'll be able to stop him—you wouldn't have been able to stop him yourself, *at the end*."

There was nothing in this speech, Dan thought, that would prevent him from shaking his cousin by the hand, if George would only grip his in return; yet, remembering every word of Ned Joyce's letter to him, he said—

"You held out a hope that I might save my father's life if I came quickly."

"Aye; but he hadn't taken the last plunge then. I remembered that you'd kept the temptation from him better than your cousin, perhaps, had the nerve to; and that was why I had some hopes, *when I wrote*."

"And Cooinda? Of course it and everything else goes to George? Well, let it; so long as he had no hand in my father's death, I don't care."

"There's reason to believe that your poor father's views changed towards you at the end. They say that the last word he uttered was your name; and it is therefore, according to my notion, your duty, Master Dan, to go to Cooinda, and stay there, at all events, until your father has been buried and the will read. For there *is* a will, and Master George means to have the lawyer up from Cooloomurra to read it, in the presence of the doctor and a regular gathering of the station hands, as I know for certain."

"That makes it still more sure that he is the only party interested under it; which being the case, why should I go to Cooinda merely to be kicked out of it again?"

"You should do so, because you have no right to believe your dead father guilty of an act of gross injustice until the most convincing facts have clearly proved him so; and that proof cannot come *until* the reading of the will," rejoined the overseer, impressively,

"You are right; I'll go at once to Cooinda," said Dan; and, having so resolved, he went; first of all, however, telling Ned Joyce all about the contents of the leather saddle-bags, and requesting him to conceal the gold in a safe place.

Well, Dan was received by George Barrington in the most cordial manner, though the courteous way in which his second cousin entreated him to "use Cooinda as his home," was suggestive of its being already that cousin's property, to say the least.

Dan's feelings were, however, far too much engrossed by grief to allow him to take much note at the time of the ambiguous expression, and he mourned for his father all the more intensely, perhaps, on account of their not having been reconciled before his death.

The third day after the squatter's decease, as is almost invariably the case in the semi-tropical climate of New South Wales, he was buried in the little bush cemetery, which we have already described, beside his late wife; being borne thither in a bullock cart for want of a hearse, and the funeral being attended by a couple of neighbouring squatters, his medical man, and his attorney (though during the whole course of his life he had been almost as rare a client of the one as a patient of the other); whilst Dan acted as chief mourner, with George Barrington, displaying by far the most grief of the two, though he did not feel a tithe of the amount, riding by his side, and the procession being brought up by all the station hands, also on horseback, and headed by Ned Joyce as overseer, wearing crape round their arms as the sole badge of mourning.

The service over (a simple but impressive one), the entire cavalcade returned to Cooinda, the empty bullock

cart now following in its rear ; and after partaking of the "funeral baked meats," they gathered in the largest room of the station to hear the forged will read, which Ned Joyce had impressed upon George Barrington could not be done too openly, or in the presence of too many witnesses.

The "quality" occupied the head of the table, but Dan, from the moment of his father being placed in his last narrow home, had voluntarily, though at the same time almost unconsciously, yielded up the management of everything to his cousin, who now, after seeing that the lower portion of the room was filled by as many of the station hands as it would conveniently hold, and that they were all accommodated with chairs, placed a small sealed package in Mr. Blackmore the attorney's hand, modestly declaring that he *believed* it to be the will of the deceased, and that though he thought that he knew its provisions, he wished it to be read aloud.

Well, it *was* read aloud, and so short was it that it didn't take five minutes in the reading.

Though so brief, however, it was eminently to the point, for it gave everything to the testator's "dear adopted son, George Barrington," constituting him sole executor, and charging him with the payment of but one legacy, namely, "the sum of three hundred pounds to Edward Joyce, in appreciation of his six years' most faithful services."

Dan Macdonald heard it to the end without exhibiting the slightest sign that it affected him in the least, and when he had done reading, the little lawyer, in order to relieve, perhaps, the somewhat awkward silence that ensued, said to the overseer—

"I congratulate you, Joyce, upon the way in which your late master has remembered you, not so much on account of the gift in itself, as for the manner in which it is referred to, and which stamps you for all time as a faithful servant, than which no character living deserves to be more respected."

"Well, Mr. Blackmore," retorted Ned Joyce dryly, "that's a very pretty speech, and if I deserved it I dare say it would sound all very nice; but, you see, I *forged* that will, aye, signatures and all, so that I can lay no more claim to your compliments than I can to my dead master's three hundred pounds."

"Liar!" screamed George Barrington, springing to his feet, with eyes flashing, face ashen pale, and every limb and muscle on the quiver. "Liar! You've been bought over; but be careful what you're about, for I can send you to Cockatoo, and you know it. I can send you back to penal servitude, you scoundrel—you *lifer*!"

"Gentlemen," said Ned, "*he has told you why I did it*. He has answered the question that in another minute one of you would doubtless have put to me; and it was because he *had* that power over me which you have heard him imprudently boast of, that he was able to compel me to do his vile bidding. But, you see, I've come to the conclusion that I'd rather go back to Cockatoo—aye, and labour there in chains the rest of my days—than I'd help to cheat a lad whom I taught to shoot and ride, and in the process learnt to love, and who I know his father forgave before he died, for the sake of such a born limb of the gallows as his cousin over there."

"My good—my generous friend! I wish to heaven

you had left me a beggar rather than so wholly sacrificed yourself for my sake!" exclaimed Dan, springing to his feet and grasping Ned Joyce by the hand.

But at the same instant George Barrington shrieked out afresh—"The man is lying to you through thick and thin, and I repeat that he has been bought over. Why, there are a dozen people present who can swear that he can't even sign his name, and that he makes his mark to everything. Speak up, all who know this. Speak up, I say!"

Thereat several voices did "speak up" from the other end of the room, to the effect that Ned couldn't write a word, and always made a mark instead of a signature; but, whilst George glanced triumphantly around, Ned quietly said to him—

"On what charge, if I can't write, could you send me back to Cockatoo? Answer me that, and I'll give you best."

Then, when every one clearly perceived that George Barrington was completely cornered by this question, Ned added—

"That the will is a forgery is easily proved. You will find it dated the ninth of last December, Mr. Blackmore, and if you'll hold it up against the light you'll discover, by the water-mark, that the paper it's written on wasn't manufactured until six months later. I chose it on purpose five days ago, out of a package just sent up from Sydney."

"It's quite true that the water-mark proves the paper to have been manufactured six months after the date on which the will purports to have been written and signed, and that stamps it as a forgery beyond the shadow of a doubt, making Mr. Dan Macdonald owner

of Cooinda and all its possessions as heir-at-law of his father—that is to say, if no other will can be found,” declared the solicitor then.

“There is no other will. My benefactor destroyed the one that he had made in my favour, giving me everything of which he should die possessed, in his drink-produced madness, three days before he died,” exclaimed George Barrington, foaming at the mouth.

“And thereby you were beaten with your own weapons, for it was you—yes, you, who owed everything to him—who first set his besetting temptation in his path; aye, and laid it there again and again in order for it to kill him, that you might be owner of Cooinda all the sooner,” said Ned Joyce contemptuously.

“You liar, you jail-bird. I will send you back to stone cells and iron bars for all this; aye, I will do it within four-and-twenty hours—see if I don’t. I know all about your transaction with the police-sergeant, remember, and now I will begin by narrating it in order that every one present may know what an infernal scoundrel you are,” yelled Barrington.

“Stop,” said Dan Macdonald impressively; “whatever Ned Joyce has done in the past, in the present transaction the law would not allow him to suffer *alone*, so if my cousin would himself escape the stone cells and the iron bars that he talks so glibly about, I advise him to keep silent, for as surely as they enclose Ned Joyce, so surely shall they enclose him also. I warn him, too, that if he isn’t desirous of being hunted off the Cooinda Run with well-plied stock-whips, he had best be outside that window in three minutes, and be clear off my property in three hours. Let him look me fairly in the face

and he will read there that my warnings had better be attended to."

George did look into his cousin's face, and the next instant acted on his advice by sneaking out through the open window in the most cur-like manner possible, followed by a suppressed hiss. He was never heard of again.

Happily perhaps for Ned Joyce, the police-sergeant who had such a weakness for hush-money was shot, out of revenge, by the brother of the bushranger he had captured and delivered up to the gallows; and happily beyond doubt for Mark Fallon of Warrigal Flat, his late partner allowed Lubra's deep fang-marks in his neck and pistol-wrist to be his sole punishment; in fact, Dan never more troubled his head the least about him, perhaps because he now had so much more important matters to think of.

Of course neither his legal nor his equitable rights to Cooina could be for a single moment disputed, and every one on the station had without doubt deep reason for being thankful that *he* was their master instead of his cousin George.

As for Ned Joyce, he retained his old post of overseer, but with a new house and a doubled salary, and he was also as much trusted by his young master as though he had never committed a felony.

Poor fellow, his first crime, like his last, had been the forging of a will, and he had done it for no profit to himself, but in order that the widow and young children of a just deceased friend might possess what else must have all gone to a wild and spendthrift elder son as the heir-at-law, and it was the weakness of friendship that betrayed him into crime.

It was for this that Ned had been sentenced to penal servitude for life, for the crime of forgery was very heavily punished up to a few years ago ; and, however looked at, Ned's action was a crime, for no man has a right to do wrong even to indirectly effect a good.

THE BLACK BLOODHOUND.

INTRODUCTORY.

IN the year 1866 I was living in Tasmania, once called Van Diemen's Land. I had gone there from Australia to edit the *Hobart Town Fun*, the first paper of the Charivari class ever produced in the colony.

The position won me many friends and acquaintances, and I am not at all ashamed to own that some of them had once been convicts, yet had grown as worthy of respect and esteem as any of the free settlers, through the long leading of blameless and honourable lives, and the exercise of that honest industry which had raised several of them to a good social position, and a few to the possession of even large fortunes, of which they, as a rule, made a most excellent use.

One of my friends, who was *not* of this class, but who considered himself as being in no way above it (on the principle that a great sinner who has sincerely repented stands higher in the sight of God, and should therefore do so likewise in that of his fellow-man, than a petty sinner who has never felt any sorrow whatever for his minor offences), had lived in the colony for twenty-nine

years, having come out as surgeon superintendent (being at the time an officer on half-pay in the Navy) on board the convict ship *Sterling Castle* in the year 1837.

To him I am indebted for many tales of the terrible old days, when the beautiful island was a penal settlement, tales calculated to arouse emotions of horror and pity in any breast, as well as to prove the oft-quoted adage, of how much more strange truth sometimes is than fiction.

I will now proceed to narrate one of these true stories; it is concerning a brave and noble boy who was condemned to fifteen years' penal servitude on an island that was at that time a perfect hell on earth, for no graver fault than shooting a pigeon upon a gentleman's private grounds, the law presuming that his *intention* was to shoot game, and therefore that he was a poacher.

Should such a tremendous punishment for so trivial a fault prove to some readers beyond the bounds of belief, I will refer them to the October part of the *United Service Journal* for the year 1847, where, in an article written by my surgeon friend, fully describing his journey to the Antipodes, and entitled *A Voyage in a Convict Ship*, the case is incidentally mentioned at page 193, but not dwelt on.

I will now set myself to the task of telling it as it was told to me.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH TOM HARPER AVENGES HIS SISTER'S
BOXED EARS.

TOM HARPER was a farmer's son, but the farmer came of a good old stock nevertheless, so that Tom was as much a young gentleman by birth and lineage as was Archie Gray, the neighbouring squire's only boy, who, nevertheless, regarded him as a cad, and felt much incensed because he did not touch his cap to him when they met.

But "the young squire," as he was generally called, had no right to feel anything of the kind, for the Grays had made all their money in trade, and then bought Fawley Hall and its wide domain, and had a coat of arms manufactured to render themselves more worthy, as they thought, of the loveliest spot in Herefordshire, expecting to take equal social rank with the old county families who had been established there for centuries.

One of those oldest families was the Harpers, and within the parish church of Holm Lacey was told in quite half-a-dozen mural tablets what they had been in the past.

But reckless extravagance had shipwrecked their long run of honourable prosperity, and that was why Tom Harper's father was glad to *rent* a hundred acres that *his* father had owned; and he was now a tenant farmer over land which that reckless parent had possessed in fee-simple with at least five times as much added thereto.

This was why Tom Harper would not touch his hat, or "lout low," to Archie Gray, whose mother's vanity had reared him as proud as any lordling, or rather as proud as boy lords are supposed to be, for in point of fact our young nobility are, as a rule, more manly and less vain than our young *parvenus*.

Tom's mother was dead, and his father had grown a morbid and morose man through constantly bemoaning the irrevocable past, instead of making the best out of the malleable present.

He even seemed to resent his son's high spirits, the natural adjuncts of youth and health, as betokening a proper want of feeling, considering their altered circumstances, and thus it was that Tom and his twin-sister Bessie were drawn closer together in mutual sympathy and companionship; and certainly never was brother fonder of sister, or sister of brother, than were these two of each other, and little wonder either, for Bessie was as beautiful as Tom was handsome, and as gentle as he was daring.

At the period when our tale opens the twins were sixteen years of age, and Archie Gray, of Fawley Hall, about seventeen. He was half a head taller than Tom, but not half so sturdily built, and had been supplied freely with pocket-money at Eton, and spent so much of it on sweets, pastry, and British wines, that he had never been in a condition for boating, cricket, football, or any other boyish sport, and there-through had been conscious of possessing a liver at twelve, a discovery which ought not to be made until at least four times that number of years have run their course.

Now Archie had no settled vices except his egregious vanity and very bad temper. Happily for himself and

for others, he had not inherited the unforgiving and bitterly revengeful disposition of his father; though, owing to his action, that father's malignity was destined to work poor Tom Harper's ruin, as we shall see anon.

The action that I have referred to was as follows:— Archie Gray, whilst home during a vacation, had the misfortune to contract a fit of calf-love for pretty Bessie Harper.

Such a disease is apt to attack boys of his age, like the measles, and sometimes it makes them just as uncomfortable while it lasts, which isn't in general very long.

Archie Gray took the complaint mildly, for he loved himself a great deal too much for any other sort of affection to be very deep. Nevertheless he felt greatly disappointed if he couldn't see Bessie every day, and sometimes he put himself to considerable inconvenience to contrive to do so. Then he cast sheep's eyes at her in church on a Sunday, and continually waylaid her in the fields and lanes, on which occasions he would regard her much as a hungry school-boy regards pastry inside a shop-window which he longs for but hasn't the money to buy, and say a few common-place words very awkwardly, remembering after leaving her a score of eloquent things he had *meant* to say but hadn't.

On one occasion, however, he summoned up sufficient courage to give Bessie a flower, and to ask her for a kiss in exchange. But Bessie immediately threw the flower away, and declined to grant the petition.

Archie Gray then caught hold of her, and stole what had been refused him, whereupon Bessie slapped his face as hard as ever she could, and the stinging blow arousing his naturally beastly temper, he (just as he

had been accustomed to treat his sisters when they vexed him in any way) returned the attack by boxing Bessie's ears right soundly, calling her "a spiteful little cat" the while.

It was at that moment that Tom Harper put in an appearance on the scene, so suddenly that it seemed almost as though he had sprung up out of the ground, and exclaiming, "You bully and coward, to strike a girl!" with a blow straight from the shoulder he knocked the young squire down.

This much effected, Tom's jacket was off and his shirt-sleeves were rolled up, almost to his shoulders, in a twinkling, so that when Archie Gray rose from the ground he gazed upon a lad who, however much he had despised him in the past, he certainly didn't entertain that feeling for in the present.

"Come," said Tom, encouragingly, "if you are fond of boxing ears, mine are at your service—that's to say if you can get at them. Why do you hesitate? why don't you try it on, eh?"

"I didn't mean to hurt your sister. Fact is, I'm very fond of her. But, you see, when anybody slaps my face I can't help losing my temper," stammered young Gray.

"Vent your temper upon me, then, and not upon a *girl*," exclaimed our hero indignantly.

"No, I won't," answered the squireen, thrusting both his hands into his coat-pockets, and fronting his antagonist with a cadaverous countenance, for the blow he had received had knocked all the pluck out of him. "I'm very sorry that I touched your sister, but all the same I'll make you a vast deal more sorry if you dare to hit me again; see if I don't."

"Oh, is *that* the time of day?" laughed Tom sarcas-

tically; and then laying a hand on each of Archie Gray's shoulders, he twisted him round till his face was towards home, and next applying the toe of a boot lightly to the seat of his trousers, he added, "There, go home to your mammy and take some pap;" after which he turned to his sister and said sternly, "If I ever catch you speaking to that son of a shoddy-maker again, I shall tell you very plainly indeed that you are disgracing your family; and as for him, why, I'll give him the biggest thrashing he ever had in his life, no matter where he chooses to stow his hands."

Doubtless this speech was intended a great deal more for Archie Gray's ears than it was for his sister Bessie's, for Tom happened to know perfectly well how the young squire had been worrying her of late. Be that as it may, Gray took the words most desperately to heart as he shuffled off homewards, for to be looked down upon by a tenant farmer's son hurt his feelings a great deal more than the being *knocked* down by him did his flesh.

CHAPTER II.

FIFTEEN YEARS' PENAL SERVITUDE FOR SHOOTING A PIGEON.

MR. GRAY senior, upon beholding his son and heir arrive home with two peony red cheeks in lieu of his usual buff-coloured ones, and a black eye to match his blue one, forced him to a full confession of all that had happened, and by the time that Archie had finished his story, Mr. Gray senior's cheeks were almost as red as his offspring's, though from a very different cause.

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That a mere farmer's son should lay violent and profane hands on the heir of Fawley Hall, struck him as an enormity little short of sacrilege.

Thoughts of an action for assault and battery, with fine or imprisonment for Tom Harper as an almost immediate consequence, flitted for a moment through his brain, but were then discarded through the fear that Archie's conduct in the affair would not show up in court in a particularly creditable light.

He was going to Sandhurst to be prepared for the army shortly, and the story of his being thrashed without even showing fight by a lad of his own age would not be a favourable introduction. So nothing more was said, and as soon as might be he was entered a cadet at the Royal Military College.

Three years flew by, and during that period Archie Gray had changed his sweetheart scores of times, calf-love having assumed a chronic form in his case, though happily of a very harmless and mild type.

His father, however, was made of sterner stuff, and never during all that time either forgot or forgave the insult which Tom Harper had put upon his son by thrashing him, and upon his own new and highly-relished position amongst county magnates and magistrates, by calling his heir "the son of a shoddy-maker," and declaring that his (Tom's) sister was "disgracing herself by being seen with him."

Unhappily for poor Tom, as it afterwards proved, he had regarded his leave-taking of Archie Gray as so clever and so stinging, that he had repeated it with a great deal of pride to several of his acquaintances, and these had in turn told theirs; so that when Mr. Gray had next driven through Holm Lacey in his new mail

phaeton, whereon was emblazoned his equally new coat of arms, he had been greeted with cries of "Old Shoddy," and the name had stuck to him as closely as a limpet sticks to a rock.

Perhaps it stung him all the more because it touched a raw part, for he really had been a cloth manufacturer, and made the major part of his wealth out of army contracts, wherein the quality of the clothing with which he supplied our gallant troops should have won him hemp rather than gold, for shoddy and devil's-dust had been the chief ingredients in their composition. Owing, however, to there having been jobbery all round, exposure and punishment had never fallen upon him like a Nemesis.

Still, as we have said, the name of "Old Shoddy" stung him as a hornet might have done, notwithstanding that Tom Harper had not had the slightest idea how well the cap would fit the family head when he had presented it to young Gray to wear.

Time had even deepened Mr. Gray's malignity towards our hero, and indeed towards all who were connected with him. He, however, concealed his animosity, in order that he might be able to gratify it all the more securely so soon as ever a chance arose for doing so; and when he at last learnt that Tom was the possessor of a gun, he felt that the opportunity would not have to be waited for much longer.

Our hero was now nineteen years of age, a time of life when shooting and fishing prove almost irresistible attractions; but, as lord of the manor, all the fish in the Wye (the only river that was anywhere near) belonged, for miles up and down the stream, to the owner of Fawley Hall; and as for shooting, the game laws

were then so severe, and so strictly administered, that for an outsider to even aim at a partridge or a pheasant was regarded by the typical country magistrate of the period as a crime almost on a par with the murder of a fellow-creature.

Now Tom Harper was what we should call in these days a "bit of a radical," and so he thought the game laws very absurd and unjust. We don't say whether he was right or wrong, we only state his views.

A good deal of his father's farm was bordered by the Fawley Hall woods, and as the Fawley Hall pheasants and partridges fattened on his father's corn, Tom could not see how, in common justice, they belonged wholly and solely to "Old Shoddy," for so he always dubbed Mr. Gray in his self-soliloquies.

The brilliant plumage of a pheasant, as often as not rising well within gun-range of his own land, frequently made the shooting of crows and sparrows seem very poor sport indeed to Tom, especially as such brilliant-looking gentlemen did more damage to his cereal crops than all the crows and other small fry put together.

Often enough he raised his piece at them, and once he couldn't help but let fly as well, happily without result. Old Shoddy's head keeper, however, saw the action from within the wood, and reported it to his master.

"Keep a keen watch on that young fellow. He's a poacher by instinct. Catch him one *in fact*, and I'll give you twenty guineas on his conviction; but, mind you, that's between ourselves, Nelhams," was Mr. Gray's reply.

Twenty guineas were well worth looking sharp after to one in the position of a mere gamekeeper, and Nelhams *did* look sharp after them.

A week or so later Tom was peering along the dividing hedge between the Fawley woods and the farm, for traces of stoats or weasels, which had of late been paying rather too close attention to his father's poultry. It was late in the afternoon, and no one seemed to be out and about but himself.

Suddenly a big bird rose out of the stubble, and Tom's gun went up to his shoulder by instinct as it were. Bang! The bird swerved in the air, seemed to partially recover itself, gained the cover of the Fawley woods, and in the shadow of the red, yellow, and brown autumnal foliage appeared to drop.

Ere then Tom had recognized it as a pigeon, however, and was intensely wroth with himself as a consequence, for he believed it to be one of his own, and he was very fond of them all.

Calling himself all sorts of names, he got over the hedge into the wood, resolved, if he could do nothing better for it, at all events to put the poor bird out of its pain; but whilst looking for it amongst the undergrowth, he was collared by a gamekeeper, who exclaimed—

"I have got you at last, have I!"

"Let me go, I am after a pigeon that I shot, like a fool," growled our hero.

"You're a liar, for you're after a pheasant, that you shot like a knave," was the coarse retort.

Tom could not stand being spoken to like that, and so his answer was a blow.

But he had no Archie Gray to deal with on this occasion, and received one in exchange that stretched him on the ground.

Before he could rise, the keeper had sprung upon and

handcuffed him, and then, whistling for an assistant, who was near by, the two walked him off between them to the village police-station, and he was locked up therein.

Did space permit we might make interesting matter out of how the very next day our hero was arraigned before a bench of country magistrates, all excellent men in their way, yet to whom the game laws were as sacred printed matter as their very Bibles, and who, after hearing the evidence of the head keeper and his assistant, who both swore that the prisoner had shot at a pheasant, even though he had hit a pigeon, and "that 'twas not the first time either," eventually committed him for trial at the Hereford Assizes, then close at hand, answering his father's agonized appeals for mercy with polite regrets, but declaring that an example must be made, etc.

At the assizes some of these gentlemen sat on the Grand Jury, as did also Mr. Gray, of Fawley Hall, so 'tis little wonder that a "true bill" was found; and in those days, in a purely agricultural county at all events, a petty jury rarely disagreed with the Grand Jury in opinion, so that Tom Harper was found guilty, and the judge, who in the previous case had sentenced a man to "be hanged by the neck till he was dead—dead—dead," thereafter expressing a pious hope that "the Lord might have mercy on his sinful soul," his crime being that he had stolen a sheep in order that the souls of a starving wife and five small children should not prematurely part company with their bodies, now meted out to Tom Harper a sentence of fifteen years' "transportation beyond seas."

CHAPTER III.

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF LIFE, AND A CHANGE OF
SCENE TO VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.

TOM accepted his undeserved sentence like a man, but all the same he found it a sore trial parting with his father and his sister, especially with his sister, whom he loved with a very deep affection, which was returned in equally abundant measure.

To add to the poor girl's troubles, no sooner was her brother gone than her father, who had always taken a gloomy view of life, sought to assuage this great and crowning care with drink.

Vain were all her efforts to restrain him; argument and entreaty proved alike useless; he soon spent twice the time in the public-house that he did on the farm, and so killed and beggared himself at the same pace.

Meanwhile, however, things were not going very brightly at Fawley Hall, for Mr. Gray had taken it into his head that it would be highly becoming of a man in his position to breed and train racers, and, in fact, to patronize the turf in every possible way.

He *did* patronize the turf, but the turf didn't return favour for favour, for it almost ruined him. He courted it with a fortune of five hundred thousand pounds, and in a couple of years turned his back on it just in time to preserve, maybe, five thousand.

The consequence was that Fawley Hall knew him no longer, and he retired to where he could live in

comfort, but without ostentation, on his woefully diminished income.

Archie, too, was no small sufferer through his father's folly, for instead of becoming a cornet in some dashing cavalry regiment, where his pay would not have covered the tenth part of his necessary expenditure, he had to content himself with an ensigncy in a regiment of foot, and the assurance that he must "make his pay square everything," which, even there, he found as difficult a feat as to square the circle.

The consequence was, that in less than six months he was deeply in debt, and glad to get quit of his creditors by volunteering for Colonial service, which at that time was the last refuge of hard-up officers of the line.

So, as though a retributive Providence had brought the punishment especially about, he, as the junior officer of a company of the —th Foot, was despatched to Van Diemen's Land as a Convict Guard, and to augment the small Colonial force on arrival out, on board the good ship *Walter Dunbar*, in the late autumn of 1840.

But more extraordinary still, yet another of our characters was destined to take the same long and perilous journey before that year had expired; for hardly had old Farmer Harper died, leaving Bessie almost in penury, than, such are sometimes the sudden ups and downs of life, a rich and childless distant relative in India also departed this life, and left all that he possessed to "his cousin, Thomas Harper, for life, and after his decease to his children in equal shares."

Now the Thomas Harper indicated was Bessie's father just dead, and the children were herself and brother. She therefore at once went to an attorney, who told her that her brother, as a convict, could take nothing until

his term had been duly served, but that *her* share of the fortune would be at her disposal as soon as ever certain legal formularies could be gone through.

It was then that the good brave girl determined that, directly the thing was possible, she would sail for distant Van Diemen's Land under an assumed name, there purchase a house and estate, and then get her convict brother assigned to her as a servant; for she had learnt it was the custom there to assign the better-behaved felons, and those whose crimes were not of a particularly grave character, to assist the free settlers, who were allowed their free choice out of hundreds who were offered for their inspection.

It was a bright hope, and filled her with the belief that they might yet be happy together, "for of course," she argued, "she could treat Tom as a brother although he was nominally a convict servant." That he had been well-behaved during such time as had already elapsed of his term of captivity she very naturally regarded as a matter of course.

Thus it was that, third in point of time, Bessie Harper started off on what was then very frequently a six months' voyage, to the same dismal bourne to which her twin brother had been despatched in chains, and her once gawky boy-lover had gone to escape duns; and now it is high time that my readers should take the same journey, though I hope in a much more agreeable manner.

CHAPTER IV.

CHOLERA.—MUTINY.—THE DOCTOR AND HIS BROOM-STICK.—ARRIVAL OUT.

HAVING the choice of going out, as it were, with either of the three leading characters of our tale, we will do so with Tom Harper, by reason that his voyage happened to be the most full of incidents.

The *Sterling Castle* took in most of its cargo of crime at the Cove of Cork, but the cholera happened to come aboard with it, and for some weeks three or four bodies, sewn up in sail-cloth, were to be seen lying on the fore-castle every morning, waiting to be committed to the deep.

The fell disease at last took its departure, and many chained felons lamented that it hadn't taken them along with it.

Flogging with the cat, inflicted for the slightest breach of the regulations, was almost continual, and the Black Hole (a small wooden watchman's box, that had apparently been brought on board for the express purpose, and fixed up in that part of the hold where darkness may be said to have been made almost tangible, and where the stench of bilge-water was almost overpowering) was seldom without an inmate.

To enforce cleanliness, which the Irish convicts especially seemed to be particularly averse to, the doctor used to make his inspections carrying a large broomstick, and 'twas woe to the man or woman whom either his nose or his eyes declared to be in a filthy

condition. He always prefaced its application by exclaiming, "Ah, now ye're in for what Paddy gave the drum, a good bateing!"

He was especially interested in keeping the prisoners clean, and consequently well, for his pay was half-a-guinea per head for every convict he landed in the colony alive, and he was more indignant with the now departed cholera than any one else on board, because it robbed him of so many fees. "Some say that the cholera is the Wandering Jew," he was heard to growl one day; "if so, all I'll add is, that the Wandering Jew is no gentleman."

In the heat of the tropics ship-fever broke out, but though it was of a mild type, it alarmed our worthy Esculapius greatly, lest it should prove even "less of a gentleman" than the Wandering Jew.

As a palliative he persuaded the captain to permit a certain number of the convicts to keep watch alternately at night with the ship's crew, so that less impure air might be left for the absorption of those who remained below. But no sooner was this scheme reduced to practice than a plan was hatched by the convicts for taking possession of the ship.

The four sentries were to be first secured, the keys of the locked-down hatches next obtained from the infantry captain's cabin amidships, and then their comrades were to be released, after which a rush was to be made to the cuddy, its inmates secured, and then made to *walk the plank*, save just so many as would be required to navigate and work the vessel to some South Sea island, where the mutineers had an idea that they could found a free colony of their own and escape from all future molestation.

It was Tom Harper who revealed this scheme of mutiny and murder in low tones to the doctor, whilst apparently complaining of some personal ailment; for although through a terrible injustice a felon and the companion of felons, his sympathies were still on the side of law and order.

He and he alone thus prevented a catastrophe that would have been replete with horror, for through his disclosures the ringleaders of the projected convict rising were seized, and finished the voyage chained down to the lower deck.

The great Southern Ocean brought a healthy bracing coldness and crispness of atmosphere that soon banished all trace of fever, and gave a "clean bill of health" in its place.

Two months later the mountainous island of Van Diemen's Land loomed in sight, and in a couple of days more the *Sterling Castle* had beat up against an almost head wind into Storm Bay, from whence gangs of men in parti-coloured clothes, with leg-fetters on, and guarded by a squad of soldiers with shouldered muskets and fixed bayonets, could be seen constructing a road that ran close along the water's edge—a terrible forecast of their own future fates to many.

The next day a magistrate and some police officials came on board to examine the convicts, measure their heights, note down their complexions, features, and any special peculiarities in their faces, or on any other parts of their bodies; also to gather every unfavourable particular of their past careers for the information and guidance of the different departments of the Colonial Government.

This important matter over, the *Sterling Castle* moved

up the beautiful river Derwent to opposite Hobart Town, where the convicts were landed at the Government jetty, and marched into the prison barracks that adjoined it.

The next day the blackest of the stray sheep were despatched to Port Arthur, and those less sable of hue to work in the road chain-gangs; but Tom Harper, on account of the information that he had given concerning the intended mutiny on the voyage out, was offered that which a convict did not generally obtain until he had run the gauntlet both of Port Arthur and the road gangs—employment of an easy character in Hobart Town itself.

After a brief examination as to his capabilities, those making it seemed to think that he knew most about dogs, and so he was given a situation at the Cascades, a prison which derived its name from a pretty waterfall situated near it, and whose chief characteristics were that women were flogged and that bloodhounds were kept and trained there—trained for tracking runaway convicts, who had taken to what is called in our southern colonies the “Bush,” but which may be a forest of hundreds of miles in length and breadth.

Nor were these bloodhounds a mere barbarous superfluity added to all the other harsh laws and restrictions of this penal colony, for escaped convicts, only too frequently, being unable to support themselves in any other manner, attacked the lonely country farms and homesteads for the sake of food and plunder, and even murdered those who offered resistance. Without bloodhounds these scoundrels might have remained for months uncaught.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLACK BLOODHOUND.—TOM IS SENT TO PORT ARTHUR.

THE bloodhounds numbered a baker's dozen in all, and despite their ferocious instincts, some few were extremely affectionate to those who were kind to them.

Tom Harper was naturally fond of dogs, and conceived ere long a great attachment for one of these magnificent beasts called "Brutus," who, instead of being tawny of coat like most of its breed, was almost black; indeed, it was popularly known as the Black Bloodhound, and had already earned quite a fame for itself by the number of captures it had made, and the honourable wounds it had received in the King's service.

Tom loved to be alone with this leonine-looking animal, with deep o'er-hanging muzzle, and blear red eyes, whose expression had never changed from ferocity to love in contemplating any human being but himself; or, at least, so he got to believe.

However, before very long he grew to feel a much more o'erpowering interest in nobler works of the Almighty than a dog, for the Cascades was also, at all events the greater part of it, a prison for convict women, and one day he beheld, crossing the courtyard on her way to the gates, a young girl of really remarkable beauty, clad in the ameliorated kind of prison garb in which female convicts of good behaviour were sent

as domestic servants to free settlers living in the town.

He was tempted to question the head keeper of the bloodhounds concerning her. The old man replied that her case was well known, and retailed it as follows, it being a narrative of which the author will guarantee the truth, because the poor girl, in her after character of an estimable middle-aged lady, was a valued friend of his own, and showed him many kindnesses during his stay in the colony.

She had, then, as the orphan daughter of parents of good social position in England, but who through speculation and extravagance had, on dying, left her in extreme poverty, taken a situation as governess in a baronet's family, whose elder son had been smitten with her beauty and amiability and offered to marry her.

He could not be argued out of what his parents called his "insanity," and as the estates were strictly entailed, the usual threat to cut him off with a shilling was of course an impotent one in his case. He was, however, eventually induced to travel and see the world, under the promise that if, in the course of twelve months, he didn't meet any one in society whom he liked better, he should, on his return, be allowed to marry the governess (her own conduct being unobjectionable the while), if not with his parents' approval, at all events with their consent.

Under these conditions he started on his European tour with a light heart, but had not been gone a month when his mother missed several articles of jewellery, and some valuable lace, whereupon the police were called in, search made, and the things found in the young governess's box. She was at once given in charge,

tried, found guilty, and sentenced to twenty-five years' penal servitude, three of which had already elapsed.

She was now going out as governess to the children of the wife of a high Government official, "and," added Tom's informant, "if she manages to get along with *her* she'll be the first who ever has, for she's as strict a disciplinarian as a sergeant-major, and about as pleasant in her ways as a boatswain's cat."

This story made a great impression upon our youthful hero. He thought of the poor young governess all day, and dreamed of her pretty well all night, entertaining not the least doubt in his own mind that her former employer had placed the jewellery and the lace in her box, in order to get her branded as a common thief, and sent seventeen thousand miles away into long penal servitude, so as to prevent her idolized son from making her his wife; and this was really and truly the case, for that lady, years afterwards, as we shall see, confessed as much on her death-bed.

About a month had elapsed from the time of this interesting-looking girl's departure from the Cascades as an assigned convict governess, when one morning Tom observed the usual stake being set up in the middle of the prison yard for some woman to be flogged at, but the event was one of such common occurrence, that he didn't feel sufficient interest to inquire who was the culprit or what was her offence. He always shut himself up at such times with his dogs, for the sight was one especially abhorrent to him.

He did so in the present instance, as soon as ever he heard the prison bell ringing for punishment, but presently in came an official, saying—

"You'll have to score a back to-day, my man, for the

executioner is too drunk even to keep his legs, and there's nobody else handy. She's a convict governess, and has offended her mistress, who is jealous of her I suspect, and so has trumped up some charge against her, and got her sentenced to be sent here to be whipped; and she has requested that she shall have twenty-five strokes *well laid on*."

"I'd rather die than inflict them," gasped Tom, and he fully meant what he said.

"If you refuse to do it you'll be packed off to Port Arthur, for it is the superintendent himself who sent me for you, and the girl is already triced up to the post. There's the whip that you'll have to use on her," and so saying the man produced from behind his back an instrument of torture indeed, for it was short in the handle and heavy and long in the thong, and that thong was spotted with the dried gore of previous sufferers.

Tom shrank from handling it with every whit as much horror as he would have shrunk from handling a live rattlesnake.

"Come, don't be a fool," laughed the most unwelcome visitor, "*some one* must do it, you know. I guess they sent for *you* because you are a powerfully-built fellow and strong in the arm."

"Give me the accursed thing," Tom exclaimed suddenly, and as soon as ever he had got a grip of it he walked with a firm step and a calm determined face out of the kennels into the gaol-yard, and up to the group of officials who surrounded the whipping-post and its victim, the one as black as a coating of tar could make it, and the other as white as though carved from alabaster.

Tom Harper cast a glance at the poor girl, and then approaching the superintendent, who was the chief officer there, said almost appealingly, yet with an under-current of scorn in his tone that he was quite unconscious of—

“You’ve given me regular devil’s work, sir, but I can’t complain of it, because I’m only a convict. I’ve a petition to make though, and it is that I may receive thrice the number of lashes that that poor girl is sentenced to, as her substitute. Come, sir, if you will but grant me this request I’ll feel more obliged to you than I can express.”

The superintendent heard him to the end without interruption, so greatly was he astounded at a convict daring to dispute the propriety of anything that was ordered to be done. No sooner had the last word escaped Tom’s lips, however, than the official snatched the whip out of his hand, and swearing horribly the while, commenced to belabour him therewith with all his might, exclaiming between his oaths, “Here—take—that—and that—and that. I’ll give you what you ask for, and then you shall give the wench what’s justly ordered her all the same, you mutinous dog you.”

It was a bad job for Tom Harper then that he was not possessed of the meek spirit of a martyr or a saint, for, being only a high-spirited youth, and the owner of a naturally hot temper to boot, a tremendous slash from the heavily-thonged whip right across the face tempted him to retaliate with a blow that stretched the brutal superintendent on the broad of his back.

The next instant Tom was struck and stunned by a pair of chain handcuffs, with the result that he was in hospital for more than a week, and then sent as “a

mutinous and desperate character " to Port Arthur in Tasman's Peninsula.

As for the poor girl at the whipping-post, she received her punishment from other hands, and was then sent back to the same inhuman mistress, who doubtless satisfied herself by ocular demonstration that the twenty-five strokes she had solicited for her hapless and helpless victim had been "well laid on."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MASTIFF AND THE SHARK GUARDS.—TOM HARPER MEDITATES ESCAPE.

PORT ARTHUR, or rather Tasman's Peninsula, for the latter was its older and more honourable name, was a track of exquisitely beautiful country, nine miles in length by about seven in width, stretching into the Southern Ocean, and joined on to the mainland by a narrow strip of sand about a hundred yards across from sea to sea.

It was thus esteemed a very secure spot wherein to confine convicts of the more desperate and dangerous kind, because the only possible avenue of escape therefrom lay across the narrow isthmus of sand just mentioned.

We will now explain how that isthmus was guarded, in order to prevent it from being made use of.

We have said that the strip of sand dividing sea from sea was about a hundred yards wide. Well, right

across it, and equi-distant from each other, were placed fifty large casks, and each cask housed a huge, fierce, and powerful mastiff, who was attached thereto by a chain of sufficient length to allow of his rubbing noses with both his right and left hand companion.

Thus, any convict who wished to run the gauntlet of Eagle Hawk Neck, as the isthmus was called, could not do so without being assailed by two of these terrible dogs at once, from whom his chances of escape would be small indeed.

But as if these mastiffs were not a sufficient guard over the hapless wretches imprisoned at Port Arthur, about fifty yards to the rear of the fifty casks and their fierce canine tenants stood three sentinel-boxes, tenanted night and day by three soldiers of whatever regiment might be quartered at the time in Van Diemen's Land; and at about a like distance behind these again there was a log cabin, or guard-house, occupied by soldiers under the command of a subaltern, whose muskets were kept loaded, and who were presumably always ready to turn out at a moment's notice.

As for swimming across the reach of sea that bordered the isthmus on either side, and gaining the densely-wooded mainland beyond, that was fully as perilous a feat as endeavouring to run the gauntlet of mastiffs and soldiers, for the water literally swarmed with monstrous sharks, whose presence was systematically encouraged by the casting therein, at those two special points, all tainted meat, with the bones and offal of such animals as were slaughtered on the peninsula for the use of the many hundreds of prisoners, by whom these pampered sharks were a great deal more dreaded than the mastiffs and soldiers combined.

With this brief description, which is necessary for the better understanding of what I shall presently have to narrate, I will return to the fortunes, or rather *misfortunes*, of poor Tom Harper.

On reaching Port Arthur he was harnessed like a dumb beast, in company with five others, to the tram-car which ran on rails from the inland convict settlement to the Government landing-stage, four miles distant, and which was the only means of transit for all manner of stores, and for the officials who were constantly coming and going. No persons except officers, soldiers, or gaol officials were, as a rule, allowed to land on the convict peninsula.

This eight miles to and fro journey had to be made several times during each day, and the human team consisted of only two relays. Each gang had therefore barely two and a half hours' rest after their eight miles' spell before they were wanted again, for they were kept at a run nearly the entire distance, going at racing speed down inclines so that the car might run all the further up the opposite rise without their being forced to pull it. Thus in the short days of winter each human team dragged the tram-car sixteen miles, and in the long days of summer twenty-four miles, because in the one instance the journey between the prison and the port was made four times daily, and in the other six times; and here I may mention, that in Van Diemen's Land the summer days are an hour shorter and the winter days an hour longer than they are in England.

On a poor wretch worked in this atrocious manner, it was little wonder that the beautiful foliage of the blue gum, the silvery bark of the shea-oak, the yellow tufty blossoms and fragrant perfume of the golden

wattle, or the hawthorn, sweet-briar, and geranium hedges, which, in company with the almost perpetual blue of the Southern sky, combine to render Tasman's Peninsula a perfect terrestrial paradise, failed to make any pleasing or soothing impression.

It was true that sometimes, during the two and a half hours' spell that separated his journeys to and from the port, Tom would drag himself down to the shore of the placid lake that lay just below the prison, and throwing himself down by the water's edge, would gaze across it wistfully at the little island that rose from its centre, where he could see the green mounded graves of the dead, all covered with huge bell-mouthed convolvuli and wild roses, and wish that he lay in one of them, for this beautiful water-girt spot was the convict burial-ground, and was, and indeed still is, called Mort Island.

How different, he would sometimes reflect, was the calm and dreamless sleep of those who were lying there, to his own constant round of almost ceaseless toil—toil which he considered to be degrading to his manhood, because even a donkey or a mule could have performed it better; whilst as for his companions—ah, neither the galling harness nor the convict constable's whip, who drove, or indeed both combined, were so terrible to him as were the oaths, the looks, the outward manners and the secret ways of the villainous ruffians with whom he had been herded.

However, the lethargy of despair at length seemed to leave him somewhat, for it is an almost impossible matter to wholly obliterate hope from the breast of a healthy young fellow of twenty-one, and at such age he had now arrived.

That hope pointed either towards a successful escape, or the being killed in the attempt, for Tom felt that death itself would be a change for the better from what he was now enduring.

"Yes, I will escape or perish in the effort. If I am caught it will be but the scaffold and Mort Island, and if not I may be able to seize upon a boat, and therein reach some desert island perhaps, for they say there are hundreds of such round about these shores, and there, if I cannot manage to live like a Crusoe, I shall at all events die like one, without prison gyves and fetters on."

Such were Tom's frequent reflections and resolves, and it will be perceived that even at the best they were not very bright ones.

CHAPTER VII.

EAGLE HAWK NECK.—MASTIFFS AND SHARKS BOTH
BAFFLED.

ONE night in the hot summer-time of the ensuing year, a young officer sat in the strong wooden hut that was fitted up like a guard-room, and had inclined wooden planking along one side for the soldiers; which hut we have before described as standing at a little distance in the rear of the three sentry-boxes which overlooked the line of mastiff dogs and their habitations stretching across Eagle Hawk Neck.

Being on duty he is necessarily in full uniform, as are

the soldiers whom he commands, but who are playing at cards and dominoes in the background, and, notwithstanding the presence of the young ensign, occasionally quarrelling and blaspheming aloud.

He doesn't even attempt to reprimand them, for he knows that it would be of little or no use; and besides, he has no particular desire that way, for the very nature of the service has demoralized both officer and men, the latter because their home indulgences of billet and marching pay are put an end to; the proper custom of two hours' sentry duty *only* is utterly disregarded; their barracks, bedding, and general accommodation are wretched; they are medically attended by only a convict apothecary's boy, who is paid a shilling a day for his services; are necessarily thrown amongst the vilest of the vile; and are daily served out with just so much rum as in time begets an insatiable craving for more; added to which, all *esprit de corps* is lost owing to one regiment being scattered broadcast, as it were, over a whole colony, or even two or three colonies, never so much as a single company being kept together, so that the men get untidy and slovenly, and the officers also, for "where is the use of smartening oneself up," they very naturally argue, "with none but convicts and convict constables to take any note of it?"

Perhaps some such notions were passing through the head of the young officer whom I have just introduced to the reader, for he often sighed, and sometimes puffed at his pipe almost viciously; or, with a great fern which he held in his hand, strove to drive away from his face the loudly trumpeting mosquitoes.

Suddenly, however, another sound reaches his ears of a far more exciting nature. It is the sudden and

evidently angry barking of the mastiffs, every one of them, within a moment of the first giving tongue, joining in until it becomes a truly deafening chorus.

"A canary bird is trying to escape. Come, my lads, turn out, turn out!" shouted the ensign, springing to his feet and snatching up his sword.

In an instant cards and dominoes were alike thrown down, and loaded muskets were grasped in their stead.

As the men followed their officer forth from the hut they heard a shot, quickly followed by two others, ring out from the sentry-boxes in front of them, which were illuminated for a moment by the flashes of flame and were then once more shrouded in thick gloom; for there was no moon, and the glorious constellation of the Southern Cross, though it gleamed from out the indigo-hued heavens directly overhead, threw very little light upon the earth.

The sentries had evidently therefore only fired their pieces to give the alarm, and the mastiffs were probably barking at what they *smelt* rather than at what they saw.

They were still giving tongue as angrily as ever, and all their chains clinked and rattled as they strained at them, so that there was assuredly something more than usual up.

"Come, lads, let us move down towards them and try to discover what they are kicking up all that hullabaloo about," said the ensign to his men; but hardly had he spoken when a bright and sudden light rose apparently out of the ground at some distance off upon the sandy isthmus, and when it had gained a certain height it came rushing towards them, exhibiting

immediately in its rear the face and horns of a great black bull.

A moment more, and the flaming brand, for such it evidently was, was dashed full in the faces of a couple of mastiffs, driving them yelping, scorched, and temporarily blinded back into the casks, which the bull-like form immediately rushed between and passed, and then came tearing up the hill with the torch revolving so rapidly around his face and form that they could hardly be distinguished through the circling smoke and flame.

“A devil! a devil!” at once shrieked the soldiers, for a matter of fifty years ago everybody was more or less superstitious, soldiers and sailors especially so, and the vast majority of our troops quartered in Van Diemen’s Land fully believed that the island owed its name not to one Van Diemen, its Dutch discoverer, but because it had been, and perhaps still was, the abode of Demons, for it was always pronounced Demon’s Land, and spelling they didn’t know much about.

The natural consequence was, that the red-coats, who would doubtless have met thrice their number of mortal foes without flinching, broke and scattered in all directions, and in a few moments more the ensign found himself left all alone, and the hideous object which those who should have supported him had all run away from, only a few yards off, and apparently making straight at him.

He now perceived that underneath the black bull’s head there was a man’s form, all dripping with crimson gore from throat to heels, giving him an indescribable appearance.

Nevertheless it struck the young officer that through

this coating of in places coagulated, and in others liquid and trickling blood, he could distinguish great black figures and broad arrow-heads gleaming out of tight-fitting clothing, which, ere its transfiguration, must have been bright yellow.

He had, therefore, no doubt whatever that the seeming demon, who was making a rush at him, was a convict, who had got his horrible disguise at the *abattoir* where all the beasts were slaughtered for the use of the settlement, and so drawing his sword he called upon him to surrender himself quietly.

The answer was a bellow, just such as a bull *might* have given; but the ensign was not to be humbugged by *that*, so he lunged with his weapon at the seeming demon, who, however, avoided the thrust by a quick movement, and then bringing the flaring end of his torch down across his opponent's open sword-guard, scorched the hand within so severely that the officer involuntarily dropped the weapon to the ground.

In a moment more the seeming demon had whisked it up and sent it spinning away into the darkness, after which he resumed his flight, evidently making for the grim and silent bush, which was now not more than a couple of hundred yards away.

But if he thought that he had rid himself of the ensign he was altogether mistaken, for that young gentleman had been accustomed to run fifteen or twenty mile paper-chases at Sandhurst, and was good for a very much longer spin across country than was the individual with the bull's head, who, I've no doubt, my readers have already guessed to be Tom Harper.

CHAPTER VIII.

FACE TO FACE AFTER MANY YEARS.

It was indeed poor Tom, who had been lately employed of a night-time in the butchering of sheep and cattle, and who, taking advantage of the convict constable, in whose charge he was, being drunk, had slunk away unperceived, rolled in the gore of the slaughter-house, put on the still reeking head of a dead bull over his own, and seizing upon one of the resinous peppermint-wood torches, whole bundles of which were kept nearly everywhere, and used as lanterns in the night-time, he had made off, believing that such a brand was the only thing with which he could drive the fierce mastiffs back into their casks, and that it would also reveal his horrible aspect in such a manner to the soldiers as to make them all run away, which we have seen that it really did.

His successful escape, as far as he had already gone, was very much owing to the fact, that as a convict had never yet succeeded in getting to the other side of the isthmus in defiance of mastiffs, sharks, and soldiers, whilst all the rest of the prison peninsula was surrounded by a wide and ever stormy sea, the peninsula itself was regarded as the prison rather than any mere buildings that were thereon; and assured that even if entirely unwatched no convict would ever succeed in escaping from it, the ordinary restraints of bolts, bars, and fetters were looked upon as secondary matters, almost as superfluous ones, in fact, whenever it was found

at all useful to dispense with them, as, for instance, when small night gangs were required for any special work, and so forth.

But to return to poor Tom Harper.

After he had deprived the young ensign of his sword he fancied that he should find it all plain sailing, for his recent and long experience as a mere beast of burden, attached to a tram-car wherein he had never trotted at a less speed than four miles an hour, up-hill and down, and never for a less distance than twenty-four miles a day, caused him to believe that he had sufficient speed and endurance to outrun any one.

Ere long he began to entertain doubts about the matter, however, for he could tell that his pursuer was fleet of foot, and was fast running him down, and this notwithstanding that when he had reached the cover of the bush he had thrown away his heavy and cumbrous bull's head, and put on his best speed.

Nor was it so dark there as he had hoped it would be, for the almost ghastly whiteness of the gum-tree trunks dimly revealed any darker object that flitted by them; added to which, a Tasmanian night is never *really* dark, after you have been out in it for a little while, whatever it may appear when first coming forth from a lighted room.

The young officer's eyes had ere this become familiar to what had at first appeared to him impenetrable gloom, and so he easily managed to keep the chase in view, and even to gain rapidly upon it, notwithstanding that Tom Harper had almost at the commencement trampled out the flame of his torch under his foot, and thereafter carried the extinguished brand in his hand merely as a weapon; a miserably poor one, it is true, yet, as he flattered himself, better than none at all.

Before very long an opportunity arose for him to use it, for he had barely run a couple of miles through the forest when his pursuer overtook him in a small clearing, headed, and turned upon him.

"Come, my fine fellow, the game's up. Awfully sorry to send you back into captivity, you know, but there are more than sufficient of peaceful settlers' throats being cut by escaped convicts from Macquarie Harbour, and we don't want that kind of thing repeated in Port Arthur district, I do assure you," he said to Tom, genially enough, and evidently not the least out of breath, whilst our hero felt himself to be positively panting.

"Ah, sir," he therefore replied, almost sobbing, for he saw that the officer held a pistol in his right hand, and that it was at full cock, whilst he took good care to stand out of reach of a blow from the extinguished torch, "I would far sooner be shot dead than sent back. As for cutting peaceful settlers' throats, I was not sent out here for murder, or any other crime of violence, but only for shooting a pigeon;" and then he suddenly added, with a change of tone, "But I'm a fool to expect you to believe such a tale as *that*. I'll fly at your throat instead, and then you'll *have* to shoot me, in self-defence."

"Tom Harper," was the quick and evidently deeply agitated response, "take this pistol, and this purse also. Go where you will, and may God guide you along the path that leads to freedom. I thought that you had been sent out to Botany Bay instead of here."

Tom grasped the pistol, and the purse as well, but could not help asking, "Who are you, sir, who seem to know something about my antecedents?"

"He to whom you indirectly owe the most disagreeable of them, and your most miserable present as well. Not, as I call God to witness, that I knew anything about the matter until months after it was over, for I was at Sandhurst at the time."

"What, then, you are young Gray! Archie Gray that was! The heir of Fawley Hall out here in command of a convict guard? It seems impossible!" stammered Tom.

"It's true enough. I am a penniless ensign, sent to this fag-end of existence, with no chance of promotion, no companion but the rum-bottle, and only a very little better off, as I sometimes think, than the convicts whom I am set to guard. But it is Heaven's retribution, and I am more than ever convinced of that, now that I find myself face to face with *you*."

"Aye, sir, if God really *does* visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, it doubtless is so, but not else, for I, nor indeed any one at Holm Lacey, ever blamed *you* for the wrong that was done me, because we knew that you'd a good heart, even though we didn't give you credit for the best of tempers. But I thank you, sir, for your present kindness, and I echo your prayer that God may guide me to freedom. And now, before we part, can you tell me anything about my father and sister?"

"Not a word, Tom. I'm sorry to say that *my* father lives at Holm Lacey no longer, and he never mentions it, or any one there, in any of his letters. He is almost a ruined man, and never refers to anything that happened in the days of his prosperity. Now, no more questions, but be off. A good start may make all the difference between life and death to you. Hide in the

mountain ranges till you have good reason for believing that your pursuit is abandoned in despair, and then get the best possible disguise, make for the coast, and try to cross over to the free colony of Port Philip. This is the best advice that I can think of, and the best part of it is, to be gone at once, for directly your escape is known they will track you with bloodhounds, and to escape from *them* is no easy matter. Hark, I hear some of my fellows coming this way. If they should see you without your bull's head on you are lost. Away—for *both* our sakes, away; for when you have once escaped I shall have less with which to reproach myself."

He did not stay for any answer, but started off to meet the soldiers, who were evidently coming in that direction, intending to send them off on a false scent; and so the next moment Tom Harper found himself alone in the grim Tasmanian bush, with only the stars to guide him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LONE HUT IN THE BUSH AND ITS INMATE. AN ENCOUNTER WITH NATIVES.

TOM HARPER felt that his chance of ultimate escape was very slight indeed; in fact, he hardly dared to hope for anything better than to die of hunger in the midst of the vast primeval forests which then covered at least nine-tenths of the island—an island that is very nearly as large as Ireland.

However, to die a free man is something, and he, poor

fellow, thought it a great deal; so he pushed on at as rapid a pace as he was capable of, hoping that ere day dawned he would be forty or fifty miles away from Port Arthur.

He had traversed about a quarter of that distance when he came suddenly upon a small weatherboard hut, with an old cask for a chimney, that stood in the midst of a small clearing; and well aware of the urgent importance of exchanging his convict garb for another at the very earliest opportunity, he resolved to attempt it here.

He crept softly up to the door, and heard some one snoring loudly within.

Thus far all was favourable; and as he discovered the door to be unfastened, he entered the hut, and by the light of a wood fire that smouldered on the hearth, beheld a man lying on a heap of filthy sheep-skins in one corner of the solitary room, buried in what was evidently a drunken sleep, and hugging to his breast a nearly empty rum-bottle, for the stench that pervaded the place declared the nature of the spirit.

The heat of the night, for a hot wind was blowing, had tempted him to take off most of his clothing ere he had laid himself down to indulge in his bestial orgy, and on turning it over Tom was surprised to discover the undress uniform of a soldier.

He then concluded that the fellow was a deserter, who had come accidentally across the hut whilst its rightful tenant was away, and had not hesitated to make perfectly free with all that he found within it, the rum-bottle especially.

Tom thought he deserved no better than to be treated in something of the same manner, and so he hastily

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divested himself of his bullock's blood soaked yellow convict garb, and donned the regimentals in their place, forage-cap and all; after which he threw the things which he had taken off atop of the fire, hoping that they would have smouldered away past recognition ere the drunkard on the sheep-skins recovered consciousness.

Once more out in the bush, Tom Harper pushed rapidly onwards again, across a country that was broken up into precipitous hills and deep ravines, with forests of gigantic trees rising to crown the one, and descending to still further darken the other.

In some places his progress would be reduced to something even less than a snail's pace, owing to the thick and matted undergrowth, which he frequently had to go round at the expense of a considerable detour, so utterly impervious was it.

How the loose bark on the gum-trees rattled, as the hot wind, sand-laden from the thousand miles distant deserts of Central Australia, blew it against the milk-white trunks to which it still loosely clung: and sometimes he would come suddenly across a scorched and blackened stump, against which a bush-fire had been lighted, and it would look so like a black naked savage in the gloom that he would involuntarily duck down to avoid the humming boomerang, or the triple-barbed spear, that he naturally expected such an individual would salute him with.

At length, instead of the shadow, he actually encountered the substance, for on rounding a great mass of conglomerate, or plum-pudding rock, he unexpectedly came across a party of about a dozen natives, who were fully revealed to him, as he was in turn to them, by the

newly-risen moon shining through the vertical foliage of the various kinds of eucalypti trees, which invariably turn the edges instead of the surface of their leaves to the light, and thus afford no shade even from the fierce midday sun.

The transmogrification that immediately took place in the appearance of the blacks was well calculated to provoke a burst of laughter from any one less seriously situated than our hero, for in an instant they had thrown themselves into attitudes so closely resembling the stumps and partly consumed branches of burnt trees, that a careless observer might almost have brushed against them in passing without detecting the difference.

Thus some of them stood on their heads, extending their legs in every conceivable way in which wood could have grown; others remained erect on their feet, with their arms straight down by their sides, or stretched out with every whit as branch-like an appearance as the legs and feet of their companions had assumed; and as their heads were like mops from their wonderful growth of hair and beard, they looked exactly like the huge knobs that are so common an excrescence on Tasmanian trees, laden, as is often the case, with a growth of long grass or moss.

Doubtless, on perceiving a seeming soldier come boldly out from behind the rocks, which they had camped under as a shelter from the hot wind, they had supposed that more were behind him, and had hoped by this clever and often successfully practised device to deceive them into believing that they were the charred stumps of trees which had been consumed in some petty bush fire.

When, however, they saw the intruder retreat pre-

capitately, and with evident alarm, it seemed to strike them simultaneously that he was alone; and so in the twinkling of an eye they were instinct with life once more, and catching up each man his bundle of slender, twelve feet long spears, they clambered up to the top of the vast conglomerate rock as actively as wasps skim up a window-pane, doubtless intending to kill and afterwards to eat him, for the native Tasmanians were undoubtedly cannibals at that time.

Well aware of this, Tom Harper ran for his very life, and though several of the spears hummed close past his ears, and sank quivering deep into the ground in front of him, he was struck by none, and a second volley fell short of him altogether.

He now knew that he had nothing further to fear, because the natives never dared to move many yards away from their camp in the night-time, through believing that the "Debbil Debbils" roamed through the woods at such hours, and that Bunyips (fearful spirits that live at the bottom of the deep water-holes with which Tasmanian forests abound) also ascended to the surface and came out upon dry ground in order to kill and devour those who wandered from the protecting camp-fire.

Nevertheless, as with earliest dawn they would doubtless set off in quest of him, Tom Harper perceived with a sinking heart that here was a fresh source of danger, and one which he had never calculated on; so, weary and worn out though he by now was, he did not dare to stop to take rest until he had traversed, as he conjectured, quite twenty more miles, by which time he sank to the ground through sheer exhaustion, and in less than a minute was sound asleep.

CHAPTER X.

THE BLACK BLOODHOUND AGAIN.—THE ATTACK
OF A NATIVE TIGER.

WHEN Tom Harper woke it was broad daylight, indeed his first upward glance showed him the sun so high in the heavens that it quite alarmed him, for he felt that ere then he should have been at least a dozen miles further on his way.

The fragrance of the beautiful wattles and mimosas, that everywhere surrounded him, formed a delicious atmosphere to breathe, but far more welcome to Tom was the discovery of about a dozen large fat worms, or rather caterpillars, which he found between the loose bark and the trunk of a neighbouring shea-oak, for he devoured them with positive gusto, through feeling famished with hunger, and knowing that they formed a very common food of the natives when nothing better was to be got.

Our hero finished his meal with a few berries that he knew to be succulent and wholesome, and then with a knife which he had found in a trouser-pocket of the regimentals that he had appropriated the night before, he cut himself down such a stick as should not only assist him in walking, but form no mean "weapon of defence were he attacked by a devil, a wolf, or other wild animal; for he knew it might be dangerous to fire his pistol, because the report would be audible so far off in those silent and deserted wilds.

The stick chosen and cut down (*club* would have been

a better name), Tom continued his journey, trimming his staff as he went.

During the hours of darkness he had steered his course by the stars, whereas he now had to accept the sun, in conjunction with some distant hill or mountain, for his guide.

He had not proceeded many miles, however, through the apparently interminable forest, when a strange sound in his rear caused him to look round with a thrill of apprehension, for it was like the panting breathing of some large animal, and the crackling and parting of undergrowth as it forced its way through.

A something within him seemed to tell Tom that he was already being tracked, and that this was a bloodhound which was on his trail and almost up with him. He stood still, therefore, and calmly awaited the worst, for to flee from *such* a foe, when it was so near by, would have answered no good purpose whatever.

A moment more and his worst fears were confirmed, for he could distinguish the immense head, the long drooping ears, and the broad shoulders of a bloodhound of the very largest size come pushing through the undergrowth, with its tail erect, its nose close down to the ground, and its deep-red eyes all ablaze with fury, doubtless because the scent lay warm.

In an instant, however, the entire scene was changed, for another animal bounded through the mimosas and the golden wattles, lithe, slim, and wolf-like in its build, and seized the bloodhound by the back of the neck.

Lightning quick as were its movements, Tom Harper saw the black stripes on its brown coat, and thus knew it to be a native tiger, a beast terribly fierce when hungry, but somewhat of a coward at other times.

Well, this seemed like a special interposition of Providence on his behalf, and had he been wise he would undoubtedly at once have made off, and left dog and tiger to settle their private quarrel between them.

Tom had by this time, however, recognized in the former the black bloodhound Brutus, who had been such a favourite of his at the Cascades when he had been employed at the kennels there; and so, utterly regardless of the strong probability that the animal might ere this have forgotten him, and the equal likelihood that even if he was remembered, the huge brute's naturally ferocious instincts, now doubtless excited to their highest pitch, might rise superior to any former friendship, he, much quicker than we are recording the fact, turned back to its assistance, and attacked the native tiger with the club he had just finished trimming, striking it a blow over the back of the neck that caused it to relinquish its grip on the hound, and with a snarl, to fly at Tom Harper's throat.

Our hero thereupon struck it sharply across its long foxy-looking nose, springing back as he did so out of reach of its leap.

But the tiger, alighting on the ground, was up and at him again in a twinkling, and this time would doubtless have made "dead meat" of him but for Brutus, who, just as the tiger was in the act of bounding forwards, flung himself on its back, and with his superior weight pinned it to the ground.

Once fairly underneath the huge hound, the native tiger, notwithstanding its muscles of iron and sinews of steel, had little chance of victory; for, despite its writhings, Brutus gnawed and rent at its throat until he had made a great bloody orifice therein, through

which the tiger's breath of life came wheezing forth until it was utterly spent, its limbs growing limp and flaccid with wonderful rapidity the while.

Seeing that Brutus now had it all his own way, Tom started off afresh, for he began to feel some uncertainty concerning the hound's after conduct towards himself, and the apprehension was unpleasantly intensified when, some ten minutes later, he heard him once more bounding along in his rear, and, as he could not help being aware, fast running him down.

He thought, too, that this time he could distinguish the human pursuers also, and the chances he knew were in favour of his not being mistaken, for a strong body of constables generally followed as close as ever they could upon the heels of their ferocious four-footed guide.

CHAPTER XI.

TOM HUNGERS AFTER A BEAR, AND MAKES IT WARM
FOR HIS PURSUERS.

TOM ran now, prompted thereto by instinct rather than by reason, for reason would have shown him the utter impossibility of escaping from a bloodhound in *that* fashion.

Indeed, in considerably less than five minutes Brutus came into full view again, with the blood of the dead tiger dripping from his lank jaws, and his eyes almost as red as the very gore.

Tom perceived at last that appealing to their old acquaintanceship was his best, and indeed his sole means of defence; and so, standing still, he called the dog by his name.

Even before he did this he thought that he saw the hound's tail give a friendly wag, but after he had said "Brutus" thrice, he could not entertain the least doubt of it, for the steady, business-like run at once changed into a joyous and almost puppy-like bound, and a second or two later the dog was licking his hands with every possible canine expression of joy, and evidently wished to treat his face in like manner, only that our hero did not see the force of it.

Well, the fugitive, with tears of thankfulness in his eyes, discovered that in place of a deadly foe he had found a faithful and attached friend, and after spending a full minute in petting and caressing his old favourite, the two started off side by side through the bush, Brutus no longer "giving tongue" at intervals, as he had been duly trained to do, in order to intimate to those who were following him up as fast as they were able, the direction in which he was running.

Hour after hour Tom pushed on, in as near as he could judge a north-westerly direction, but at last the fierce hot wind that was blowing all the time in his face, added to hunger and thirst, made him realize the fact that he was almost dead beat.

He nevertheless managed to climb to the top of a conical hill, that in past ages had doubtless been an active volcanic mountain, but which was now heavily tree'd to its very summit; and that summit reached, he anxiously attempted to get a glimpse of his pursuers, for that was the end for which he had made the ascent.

At first he could perceive nought but an apparently confused jumble of scores of just such other hills, and of the valleys that lay between them, presenting an unbroken sea of foliage, varying in colour from sage-green to russet-brown, for there are no bright emerald tints in a Tasmanian landscape, when viewed from a little distance.

For a long while this was all that our hero could see, unrelieved by a single town, village, or even so much as a solitary habitation. Nor did any water meet his view, for that part of Tasmania has neither lake nor river.

At last, however, in a little clearing situated some three miles to the south-east, the fugitive beheld a blue smoke-wreath curling upwards; now and then a scarlet spot or two, looking no larger than ladybirds, seemed to be moving about and around it.

He had not the least doubt now, that there his pursuers had come across a small water-hole, and had taken advantage of an incident that might not occur again for many a weary league, to camp for half-an-hour or so, in order to boil some tea in their tin billies, and to cook some mutton, that they certainly had brought with them, ere resuming the chase; which chase Tom was sagacious enough by this time to see must result in his capture, sooner or later, unless he could hit upon a much better device for ridding himself of his pursuers than by merely running away.

Running!—it had been reduced to a mere *shuffling* away by this time, and with an empty stomach and blistered feet he had little hope of being able to mend his pace until too late.

He found some more large fat white caterpillars and ate them, also a few berries.

High up in a peppermint tree he saw a native bear looking curiously down at him; it was as large as a three months old kitten; and he licked his lips at the thought of what a splendid repast it would have made could he only have got at it; but the tree was bare of branches for the first fifty yards of its enormous height, and he was sadly conscious that he was not a good enough climber to surmount such an obstacle as *that*.

Suddenly an idea was given him by the hot, sand-laden wind that still blew so steadily from the north, curling up the leaves into seeming cigars and positively blistering his face.

It was to set the forest on fire, and convert that wind from a bane into a blessing by letting it carry a tempest of smoke and flame down upon his pursuers, forcing them to retreat before it for their very lives, whilst neither his own nor his dog's would be in the slightest degree imperilled, because they would be, from the very first, to windward of the conflagration.

He had heard of cases where, the conditions being similar to those at present existing, so small a thing as a spark from a pipe had created forest fires, which spread until they were ten or twelve miles in breadth, and advanced at the rate of from three to four miles an hour, destroying everything before them.

He had no flint and steel to strike a light with, and matches were of course unknown in those days, but he had often produced fire by rubbing two pieces of dry wood briskly together, and there was plenty of such material ready to his hand.

He lost no time in putting his thoughts into practice, and fire soon sprang from his two bits of bark. The long, heat-withered grass and undergrowth were as dry

and inflammable as tinder, and caught aflame as paper would have done.

Brutus started off with a yelping bark of alarm, as soon as ever they had ignited, and Tom hurried after him as fast as his sore feet would permit.

After a hundred yards' spurt he ventured to halt and look round, when he saw that the turpentine-charged bark of three forest trees had already wooed the flames, which were leaping up the trunks towards the branches as fast as squirrels could have run up them.

Had the wind suddenly chopped right round, without losing its force, it would have been all up with the almost exhausted fugitive, though Brutus would without doubt have been able to make good his escape; but a genuine hot wind generally blows pretty steadily from the north for forty-eight hours at a stretch, and knowing this, Tom had little fear on his own account, nor, indeed, on that of his pursuers, who would first see the bush-fire nearly three miles away, and so would be able to turn their backs on it with perhaps a clear hour's start.

Turn their backs they would be compelled to do, however, for there would be no chance of outflanking a fire such as he had lighted, at the close of a hot summer, and thus he felt assured that all pursuit would be over for at least three days and nights, and then it would have to be commenced afresh, almost from Hobart Town, so what might he not hope for from such a delay?

That night, after pushing on for another dozen miles, for to his intense chagrin he found himself too weak to do more, he ascended another hill, in order to get a good view of the country in his rear, and beheld the southern heavens all red as blood, and beneath the lurid

canopy thousands of tree-trunks standing up leafless and branchless, like Titanic columns of red-hot iron, though the onrushing conflagration had already left them miles behind.

CHAPTER XII.

NEARLY DEVoured BY A DEVIL—ADVENTURES AND SUFFERINGS IN THE BUSH.

TEARING down a great slab of loose bark from the trunk of a gum-tree, Tom now lay down to rest, and drew it over him for a coverlet; and as from its curved shape its edges rested upon the ground on either side of him, it answered its purpose remarkably well.

So safe did he now feel from any sudden surprise, that he ventured to take off his boots, and this afforded him such relief that, aided materially by fatigue, he soon fell asleep, Brutus very quickly following his example.

Some hours might have elapsed, when our hero was awakened by something gripping his left arm, which had got outside the bark coverlet, with such force that it drew from him a shriek of pain, and upon opening his eyes the light of the moon showed him that he was attacked by a Tasmanian devil, which is a wild beast of the size of a bull-dog, and in strength more than any man's match, unless he is armed, its power of jaw being tremendous, and its temper most savage.

Tom had hardly had time to realize his most un-

pleasant predicament, however, or the devil to commence work in downright earnest, when Brutus repaid the deep obligation he was under in the affair of the native tiger by springing upon the devil; when, owing to having taken it at a disadvantage, he soon overcame and killed it, for exactly the reverse might have been the case had he attacked it clumsily.

Our hero felt very grateful, as may be imagined, but as he was yet more hungry (famished would be the better word), he at once got up and lighted a fire, this time in such a way that it would not grow into a conflagration, and skinning the devil with his knife, managed to get some chops and steaks out of it, which roasting over the flames, he and the black bloodhound, notwithstanding the rank flavour of the flesh, than which a carrion crow's could not have been much worse, contrived to make a very hearty meal, which was satisfactory in every respect, save that the torments of thirst were much increased thereby.

Later in the night rain began to fall, however, and then Tom made a kind of trough out of his slab of bark, and caught enough not only for drinking purposes but for an after wash as well, which was almost as refreshing.

Our hero's spirits were damped as thoroughly as his clothes, however, when he discovered that instead of a transient shower, a steady and continuous rain seemed to have set in, for with the blue sky entirely blotted out by clouds, his sole guides, the sun and the stars, were hidden from him.

He began even to fear that this was the wet season which had set in prematurely and suddenly, as it sometimes did, and if so neither sun nor stars might

show themselves for a week or more, and the deluge from the heavens would soon extinguish the forest fire that he had kindled, and then his pursuit would be quickly taken up again, with fresh bloodhounds to the fore, and the result must sooner or later be his capture.

Some of these gloomy forebodings were ere long justified by results, for all through the day that ensued the sky was one universal dun colour, and the rain fell without ceasing. In vain our hero, having noticed the shape of the nearest hill to the north ere going to sleep, steered his course by it, and thereafter by other hills, as they opened out to him one by one, for low scudding clouds would continually hide two-thirds of their altitude; every now and then he would have to make a more or less considerable detour in order to cross some deep gully, that a few hours previously had been dry enough, but which was now swept by a tawny-coloured and foaming torrent.

In one of these crossings Tom slipped off a rock into the rapid current, and would assuredly have been drowned had not Brutus seized hold of his clothes, and by dint of his tremendous strength brought him safely to the opposite bank.

The fidelity of this black bloodhound was really touching, and it was very clear that its affection was not based upon cupboard love, because our hero had nothing to give it; whilst, on the other hand, Brutus often fed *him*, for on one occasion he ran down a female kangaroo that was big with young, and on another caught a lame 'possum before it could get up a tree.

But for these acts of assistance Tom would certainly have starved in the bush, but the kangaroo made a splendid feast in the present, and he cut off and carried

away so much of its flesh that it lasted him and Brutus for more than a week.

As for water, there was now considerably more than enough of that everywhere, for it never ceased pouring for seven days and nights, and the gully rivers were constantly compelling them to change their course, so that at last Tom had not even the least idea in what direction he was going, though hoping every hour that he should strike the sea-coast somewhere or other, for there he knew that enormous cray-fish and lobsters were always to be easily caught, and that there were numerous caves to take shelter in.

All this while he had not once set eyes on a white man, nor, happily, on black ones either, in any number. Sometimes, however, he would come across two or three of these, their black naked bodies gleaming like ebony with the rain, and each carrying a bundle of yelemens or spears, twelve feet long, and almost as slender as reeds; but he had only to put his hand behind his back to frighten them away, his red coat doing the rest, for the poor Tasmanian natives had a great dread of soldiers, whom they believed to be quite a distinct race of beings from men in plain clothes, whilst from seeing them put their hands behind their backs to handle cartridges before loading, they grew to believe that *there* lay their dangerous explosiveness, and that their muskets were only magic sticks which pointed out the direction the "death fire," as they called it, should take.¹

¹ A fact.

CHAPTER XIII.

A TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.—RECAPTURE.

WELL, we might draw out Tom Harper's adventures in the bush until we filled a volume, but space and time alike forbid.

Suffice it then to say, that after a fortnight of the most dismal and forlorn wandering, drenched to the skin almost the whole time, our hero at last came suddenly into full view of an enormous mountain, with a vast green-stone precipice along almost its entire front; and the sight caused him almost to faint with horror and despair, for he knew at once that it was Mount Wellington, and that all his painful journeyings had brought him back to within a few miles of Hobart Town, the capital city and chief penal settlement of the colony.

His flight had, in fact, been a horse-shoe-shaped one, and here he was back at the opposite point to the one he had started from, it is true, and yet the points had a terrible proximity to each other for all that.

Even hope was gone *now*, and he wandered on like a man in a dream for a mile or so further, when he came across a settler's clearing, surrounded by the usual cockatoo fence, and no sooner did he cast his eyes upon the comfortable-looking weatherboard homestead in the middle, than he could not resist the temptation of repairing thither to ask for food, and a dry before the fire, no matter what it might eventually cost him. He had got as far as the cockatoo fence, and was leaning

thereon from weakness, for it is astonishing how strength leaves a man along with hope, when he beheld a buxom-looking young woman come out of the house, and proceed round to the rear, to hang some clothes to dry upon a line.

At the sight he reeled back, and passed his hands across his eyes, as though he could not believe that which they had told him, namely, that it was his sister—his beloved twin sister Bessie—whom they had gazed upon.

“No, it could not be. How could it possibly be? He was going mad!”

Such were his reflections, and they were by no means unnatural ones under the circumstances, for he had surely endured more than sufficient to turn any man’s brain.

Despite his conviction that he was suffering from some insane delusion, in the course of a few seconds Tom Harper was filled with a wild desire to put it to the test whether it was so or no; and with that object in view he had commenced to stagger towards the neighbouring homestead, when a loud and stern voice suddenly called out “Halt!” and the next moment three or four soldiers, in command of a corporal, followed by as many convict constables, darted forth from behind the trunks of the neighbouring blue gum and peppermint trees, and levelled their pieces at him.

He was not quite mad enough to disregard the order that had been given him, when such convincing reasons for his obeying it as loaded muskets and pistols were offered. He therefore stood still, bewildered rather than despairing, and feeling as though stunned by a blow.

The corporal and his companions now advanced to take him, the former a little in advance of his men, and dangling a pair of handcuffs in one hand.

But hardly had he approached within half-a-dozen yards of our hero, when the black bloodhound, who had been standing by Tom's side all the while, looking as docile as any lamb, seemed suddenly to realize that the approaching party were foes instead of friends.

In an instant his demeanour wholly changed, the old lurid light returned to his eyes, the hair bristled up all along his back like a hog's, and without any other warning of his intentions, he sprang at the advancing corporal, evidently intending to seize him by the throat.

Had he succeeded in doing so it would undoubtedly have been all up with the poor fellow, but thanks to the thick leather stock which all soldiers wore in those days, he saved his throat from the bloodhound's fangs, who was quickly beaten over the head with musket-stocks until he relinquished his hold, and then, whilst he was still considerably more than half-stunned, he was secured by a set of leg-fetters that had been intended for human limbs rather than for a canine throat.

Brutus was quiet enough when he came round, for chains tame dogs as well as they do men, and the black bloodhound quickly comprehended the fact that he had exchanged a loving friend for his old stern taskmaster.

As for Tom, he was simply handcuffed, and told curtly that in an hour he would find himself in gaol, and that after a good scratching from *the cat* he would doubtless be sent on duty once more.

This speech informed our hero that his captors did not know who he really was, but on account of his

clothes took him to be a military deserter, doubtless the very man from whom he had taken them as he lay dead drunk in the deserted shepherd's hut.

The knowledge did not bring him much consolation, however, for he knew that his identity must soon be discovered, and then he doubted not but that he would be hanged off-hand, for *that* was looked upon as the most satisfactory way of disposing of convicts who made themselves particularly troublesome.

For the present he tried to extract some advantage from his supposed less culpable and degraded position, by representing that he was famishing, and begging that he might be taken to the house near by, in order to get something to eat and drink, for he still longed to be brought face to face with the woman who was so much like his fondly-loved sister Bessie, though all the while feeling sure that not even by the most remote possibility could it be she.

His petition, however, was refused by the corporal, whose naturally beastly temper had been stirred up to the very dregs by the black bloodhound's attack on him, and Tom was at once marched off in the direction of Hobart Town, which was reached in an hour and a half, and where he was at once lodged in the old gaol in Campbell Street.

CHAPTER XIV.

BESSIE HARPER MEETS ARCHIE GRAY.—BAD NEWS
BRUTALLY TOLD.

It was (beyond the bounds of belief though it had appeared to him) really his sister Bessie whom Tom Harper had gazed upon just before the soldiers and convict constables had seized upon him and carried him a fettered prisoner to Hobart Town.

We must now leave him for awhile, in order to narrate what had happened to Bessie since her arrival in Tasmania, where she had now resided for twelve months and a few days.

She had arrived at Hobart Town clad in deep mourning, and with a profound and apparently settled melancholy imprinted on her Madonna-like countenance.

Her first action on landing had been to secure quiet and respectable lodgings, and her next to obtain an interview with the Governor, Sir John Franklin (afterwards lost in the Polar regions), in order to apply for a farm.

She truthfully represented that her father had been a farmer in England, but had died leaving her insufficient capital to carry on farming profitably there, and that therefore she had come out to where land was cheap, and the hire of convict labourers and servants for merely their keep rendered the cost of labour nominal.

There was readily conceded to this strange and inter-

esting applicant an already cleared farm of a hundred acres, whereon stood a wooden homestead and outbuildings. It had belonged to an Irish political prisoner, who, amongst others, had been recently pardoned on our gracious Queen's accession, and who in consequence had immediately thrown it up and gone home.

As soon as ever she had taken possession of what, under the circumstances, was a perfect godsend, Bessie obtained permission to visit the Hobart Town prisons, in order to select her own convict servants and labourers.

The women, two only in number, she obtained at the Cascades. Then she went to the men's prison in Campbell Street, where she had been told that all the male convicts in the place were to be seen up to nine o'clock in the morning, after which they were despatched to their respective labours, some in one part of the town, some in another, and the worst to work in chains, and dragging a cannon-ball at their heels, in the road gangs.

The reader will not need to be told that Bessie arrived at the prison considerably *before* nine.

The governor of the gaol received her with great urbanity, listening patiently to her request, and then informed her that from his "yellow birds" he could pick her out half-a-dozen good men, as gentle as lambs, and as industrious as she could possibly wish them to be.

But this did not suit Bessie's views at all, so she declared that, "being something of a physiognomist, she would like to see all the prisoners together, and make *her own* selections," and though her wish surprised the governor greatly, he nevertheless yielded to it, mainly

because to a pretty woman he had rarely found it possible to refuse anything.

When Bessie entered the male exercise-yard, however, where the men were all drawn up for her inspection to the number of three hundred and fifty-five, she received a most crushing disappointment, in the discovery that her brother was not amongst them.

"They are not all here," Bessie stammered in her agitation.

"Who did you expect to *find* here?" asked the governor gruffly.

"Oh, no one. I dare not tell. It would ruin all. Ah, what am I talking about?" exclaimed our heroine wildly.

The governor thereupon put his arm round her, in a fatherly sort of way, and said—

"Your secret is safe with me. I know who you are looking for, because I can see his face in yours. He must be your twin brother, for no one else could so nearly resemble you. Well, cheer up, lass, and prepare to bear a disappointment with courage. He is alive and well, but has been sent to Port Arthur for insubordination, and striking an officer. For a whole year, less one day, you will have no chance of seeing him, therefore, but at the end of that period the punishment for his fault will have ended, and you will be able to go to Port Arthur and hire him as your convict servant. There, your secret, I repeat, is safe with me. You must possess a brave heart to have done what you *have* done. Let it support you still, and may happier days be in store for you both."

It was some time before Bessie Harper sufficiently regained her composure to be able even to thank the

gaol governor for his kindness; but when she had rallied so far as that, her natural strength of character soon enabled her to entirely recover herself.

She then selected six convicts to work on her farm, who had been transported for forgery, perjury, or some other crime that was unmarked by either cruelty or violence; and as one of her women-servants was old enough to be her mother, and had been the matron of an Irish workhouse, with for her sole crime the concealing of a proclaimed rebel from the officers who were searching for him, Bessie felt that she would be well able to manage the six men, and that she herself need very seldom be brought into actual contact with them.

Well, Bessie had been on her farm for a year all but two days the morning when Tom saw her from the other side of the cockatoo fence, previous to his being dragged off by soldiers and constables to the Hobart Town prison.

She, however, had caught no glimpse of him, nor had she seen anything of the scuffle that had taken place, having been busy hanging out her washing round at the back of her homestead all the while, and singing blithely as she did so, for wasn't she full of the thought that the very next day she was going down to Port Arthur, in the Government cutter, in order to claim her brother and restore him to a position of comparative freedom?

This cutter sailed from Hobart Town to the little convict settlement on Tasman's Peninsula once a week, mainly to carry stores thither, and convey officials to and fro.

It was a great favour for a private individual to be granted a passage in her, but Bessie's pretty face, and

the mystery that environed her, won her many concessions that would have been refused to a less interesting individual.

The little craft left Hobart Town in the afternoon, and reached its destination early on the following morning. Once ashore, Bessie, in company with the other passengers, had to proceed to the four miles distant prison in the tramcar drawn by convicts, and it made her heart fairly bleed to witness half-a-dozen fellow-beings harnessed and driven like mere beasts of burden in so atrocious a manner. She did not dare to express her feelings, however, and in about an hour the end of the journey was duly reached.

As she was alighting from the car, a clumsiness that was born of her agitation caused her to stumble and fall, and she was lifted tenderly up by a young officer, who, with half-a-dozen soldiers, had come to the dépôt to draw stores for the troops who were on duty at Eagle Hawk Neck, as a support to the mastiff and the shark guards.

When she had found her feet, Bessie began to awkwardly thank him, but chancing to look him in the face whilst doing so, she exclaimed, "Archie Gray!" whilst he responded in accents of equal surprise, though blended with much more emotion, "Bessie Harper!"

For fully a minute neither of them could say anything further, but then our heroine faltered—

"Oh, Mr. Gray, can you tell me anything about my poor brother? I ask you because you seem to be stationed here."

"My dear Bessie, I hope that he has escaped. He is clear away from this truly infernal place at all events. He forced the mastiff guard, and though I was in com-

mand of the detachment at Eagle Hawk Neck, I couldn't prevent his escape into the bush; *no, of course I could not prevent his escape.* Therefore there is no longer a number forty-seven on Tasman's Peninsula."

The words that I have italicized were uttered with an intonation that expressed a great deal, and Bessie took them to mean that Archie Gray had, at the very least, *connived* at her brother's escape.

Ere, however, she could utter a single word by way of thanks, for his information had actually taken her breath away, a gruff voice exclaimed at her very elbow—

"There's a number forty-seven locked up in a cell at the Campbell Street gaol in Hobart Town, and it is very likely that he'll hang before the week's out. I'm Constable Hill, and I have come down here specially to get up evidence against him. I subpœna you as a most important witness, sir, and you'll be good enough to return with me this afternoon in the Government cutter. You also, madam. I've had my eye on *you* for a long while. He was making straight for your house when he was taken. Every one thought at first that he was a deserter, for he was dressed in soldier's clothes. *That* little matter will have to be inquired into. I recognized him for what he was directly he was brought into the prison-yard. If I hadn't done so there was the broad arrow burnt into his flesh to speak for itself. That's all that I've got to say, *for the present.*"

He had said more than enough, so far as our poor Bessie was concerned, for ere he had given utterance to more than half of his brutally plain disclosures, she had recognized him as an individual, dressed in plain clothes, who had been her fellow-passenger from Hobart Town,

and who had watched her, so she had thought even *then*, in a most pertinacious manner.

The consequence was that she fainted dead away, and was so ill when she recovered from her swoon, that she had to be positively carried on board the Government vessel in the afternoon, in order to make the return voyage to Hobart Town, which she had left only the day before so full of youthful strength and buoyant hope.

Lieutenant Gray, for Archie was a lieutenant now, attended upon her with the thoughtful care of a brother, and strove his very utmost to cheer and comfort her, nathless that he was much in want of cheering himself, feeling, as he did, that his *own* position was an extremely awkward one.

CHAPTER XV.

CONDEMNED TO DIE ON THE MORROW.—WHAT WAS
IN THE BLUE OFFICIAL ENVELOPE.

Two days later Tom Harper was tried on the capital charge of escaping from the penal settlement of Port Arthur, and of resisting recapture with violence, for those who had effected his arrest swore that he had *set* the bloodhound on the corporal as the latter advanced to take him; perhaps they even believed it.

In vain Lieutenant Gray endeavoured to represent Tom's conduct whilst escaping across Eagle Hawk Neck in as favourable a light as possible. He even stretched

the simple truth somewhat in order to save Bessie's brother, by declaring that the runaway had chivalrously spared his life when he had it quite at his mercy, etc.

All was of no use. There was no jury, no advocate for the defence—only the penal magistrate, who saw that the severest discipline must be enforced in order to keep the convicts under; and so taking into account the prisoner's former act of insubordination against a superintendent at the Cascades, he solemnly sentenced him to be hanged on the morrow, and he was forthwith removed to the condemned cell.

Had Tom tenanted one pertaining to an English prison, he might have been kept awake half the night by the hammering of carpenters erecting the scaffold for his execution; but at Hobart Town the gallows was so often wanted in those bad old days, that it was a permanent structure, and when a new one was erected in 1845, the prison chaplain, on being taken to view it, exclaimed quite innocently that he thought "nine men could hang upon it *very comfortably*."

I knew this clerical gentleman in 1866, and a kinder or more humane man there could not possibly have been; and I've heard him express his wonder at how, a score of years previously, he could have given ghostly consolation to perhaps half-a-dozen or more fellow-beings on the scaffold in the early morning, and an hour or so later have eaten his breakfast with a keen appetite, and in the best of possible spirits, as he assured me that he had scores of times done.

However, to return to Tom Harper; the reader will be glad to learn, that though the gibbet awaited him, it never claimed him as its own. Bessie appealed to that noble and Christian-hearted Governor, Sir John Franklin,

who, keenly interested in the case, at once tried to find some legal loophole through which he could save Tom's neck from the noose.

A thorough sailor, and with as intense a dislike for law books as a child has for a black draught, he had suffered the library of his predecessor to become the happy hunting-ground of spiders, and the mausoleum of defunct flies. Now, however, he went into it to make his eager researches, and taking down from amongst many others a book that seemed to bear upon the subject, found, evidently placed as a marker at the very page which the index referred him to, a large blue official envelope, with the letters O. H. M. S. printed in one corner.

He looked at the post-mark, and discovered that the letter had arrived the day before his predecessor in the governorship, Colonel McArthur, had quitted office, and he had entered into it in his place; and detecting through the sense of touch that the envelope contained an enclosure, he drew it forth, opened it, and then discovered, to his equal amazement and delight, that it was a free pardon, under the young Queen of England's own hand, to one "Thomas Harper, registered number forty-seven, for his revealing of a contemplated mutiny on board the convict transport *Sterling Castle*, outward bound for Van Diemen's Land, whereby discipline was enabled to be maintained, and many valuable lives doubtless saved, etc."

Probably the outgoing official, amidst the fuss of packing-up, leave-taking, etc., had missed opening the letter, perhaps brought to him while referring to the law book, had put it in to mark the place when called suddenly away, and had never returned. But this is

mere conjecture; Franklin felt that *he* was certainly not to blame in the affair.

He nevertheless now made himself as busy in it as possible, and pointed out to the penal administration (who, like vultures, never let go of their prey if they could help it) that our hero had been a free man during the performance of every imputed offence that he had committed on the island, and that, *being a free man*, they were actually no offences at all, etc.

He was therefore acquitted, and told that there was nothing to prevent him from returning to his native land, at the Government's expense, by the very first vessel that sailed.

Tom, however, had had quite enough of a country wherein a young fellow who was fond of his rod and gun might get fifteen years of penal servitude for landing a trout or shooting a pigeon; and upon seeing his sister's farm, and learning that, in the main, she liked the new country better than the old, he declared that they would both settle there.

This they did, and not only they, but Archie Gray also, who sold his commission, obtained a Government land grant, and as soon as he had changed it into a thriving farm, married Bessie.

And did Tom remain a bachelor all his days? Not a bit of it, for in due time he wooed and wedded the convict governess, whom he had refused to lash at the Cascades; for the infamous woman who had put jewels and laces into her box in order to cure her son's "infatuation," as she had deemed it, by procuring her transportation as a felon, confessed her sin on her death-bed, and a full pardon was consequently at once sent out.

LURED TO THEIR DOOM.

CHAPTER I.

IN AN INDIAN FOREST.

IT is not in every country that you can win the most malignant and undying hatred of a man by saving his life at the hazard of your own, but you can do so in India—yes, in India, whose people are, as a rule, the most patient, gentle, industrious, and law-abiding of any in the world, and whose love it is far more easy to win than to lose, there are exceptions so terrible that they most strikingly prove the rule.

They are most frequently to be found in the zealous priesthood of a religion, who are full of secret wrath because, as the years roll by, it is yielding ground, very slowly, yet equally surely, before our own; and next in the devotees of that religion. Heaven forbid that we should blame them, for it is a grand thing to love your faith so much, even if it be a false one, as to be willing to offer up your life for it, and, if called upon, to suffer the most agonizing tortures for its sake. Our own saints and martyrs have done no more than this, and

how many are there amongst us who would do it now? For though many of our intrepid missionaries *risk* death at the call of duty, they do not *court* it, as the poor mistaken enthusiasts whom we are speaking of do.

But enough of moralizing, for I have to tell a tale the incidents of which occurred no further back than the winter of 1875; and some of them, though unknown, and even unguessed at, in close propinquity to—almost indeed in the actual presence of—our own Prince of Wales and the very *élite* of the European population, both male and female, of the Bombay Presidency.

Loftus Trezarr and I were at the time almost griffins, that is to say, we hadn't joined our regiment, then quartered at Aurungabad, more than six months, and considerably within a year from that time we had been loading, and at the same time bothering, our brains with Sanscrit, Hindoostanee, and fortifications at Sandhurst, so that we were, in point of fact, little more than schoolboys; wherefore, when we received leave from our Colonel to go down and "assist" at the reception of the Prince of Wales at Bombay, where, by the bye, one wing of our regiment was quartered, I don't think that any schoolboys could have been more delighted, or have exhibited that delight in more schoolboy fashion; for after shutting the door of the Colonel's room behind us, our high spirits drove us to indulge in leap-frog all the way down the long airy corridor outside, with the result that at its end Trezarr took a "flying angel" over my head and shoulders, precipitating himself, with the force of a battering-ram, against the rotund corporation of Major Turtle of the

Staff, who had just rounded the corner in a great hurry, but in little expectation of such a greeting.

The collision didn't hurt Trezarr's head in the least, but it doubled the Major completely up, and pretty trouble we had to straighten out his crooked body and equally crooked temper, lest he should manage to get our leave of absence cancelled, which we believed him to be quite capable of doing. However, we did manage to appease him, and that same evening we started for Bombay.

As the railway was at that time open no further than Poonah, we had to travel so far by dawk, that is to say, by Indian palanquin, with constant relays of native bearers, an expensive and not very comfortable way of getting over the ground; but happily we had recently received remittances, and our purses were as long as our patience was short. As for pace, our human steeds would trot for eight miles without a pause, singing in time to their steps the whole way, when others would take their places, and so on for the next stage, a couple of coolies running behind, each with a portmanteau on his head, and at night a musal-chee, or torch-bearer, rushing on some twenty paces ahead, not only to throw light upon the way, but also to scare wild beasts out of our track, who, without exception, have a great dread of fire.

Dawk travelling affords a capital opportunity of seeing the country and its people, and as short-cuts are often taken, you sometimes come across scenes that would not be at all likely to meet your gaze upon a much-travelled track, at all events at so late a date as the year of grace 1875.

Such a scene (which, however, I should not attempt

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to describe had it not very much to do with my narrative, constituting, as it were, its very mainspring) saluted my gaze one evening in the vicinity of an Indian village which we had just passed through.

By the bank of a river swarming with alligators, one of the many tributaries to the Indus, I believe, whose very name I have forgotten, a concourse of people were crowded together to see a man impaled alive, either as an atonement for a crime, or as a means of attaining a greater state of righteousness, for it is a penance that answers both purposes, saving the sinners from future punishment, and bringing the pious devotee up to the very gates of paradise, which he has then only to divorce his body from his soul in order to enter in at.

A strong and long pole was fixed upright in the ground, and on the top of it a transverse bamboo was attached to a movable pivot, having two cords descending therefrom, each terminated by a long bright steel hook, which hook a Brahmin priest was in the act of thrusting into the naked back of a man, who knelt upon the grass with his hands crossed as if in prayer.

Not only were the hooks thrust into his back, but they were slipped under the dorsal muscles, just beneath the shoulders, and their points forced out through the flesh on the other side of them, not a cry or even a quiver meanwhile escaping the sufferer.

He was a disgusting yet fearful-looking object—a living skeleton (doubtless from much fasting), perfectly naked, smeared all over with ghee (a sacred oil), and plastered thickly with cow-dung (which is held by the Ab'dhoots, of which sect of fakirs he was evidently a

member, to be more sacred still); but his almost fleshless bones protruded through all, as did those of his cheeks through the masses of tangled hair that almost covered his face and descended in a filthy flood far below his waist. For the rest, his eyes sparkled with either fanaticism or insanity, and his finger and toe nails were several inches in length.

We had just time to notice all these unattractive points in his personal appearance, when he gave utterance to a wild yell of apparent joy, and as though it were a signal, which it doubtless was, he was at once swung up on high and whirled round and round with frightful velocity, describing almost as large a circle through the air as a circus horse does in an ordinary-sized "ring," his entire weight being upborne by the muscles of his back, which the bright steel hooks had been forced under, and which, had he been of average man's weight instead of such a scarecrow, must have at torn those muscles out of his frame.

The Hindoos who had "tailed on" to the hoisting-rope swung the poor wretch round faster and faster, doubtless believing that they were doing him a most excellent service, whilst he kept his hands together as though in prayer. And doubtless he was praying, for his lips were continually on the move, but we could distinguish no utterance owing to the noise made by the tom-toms, tobries, kurtauls, and other musical instruments, which were keeping up a truly infernal din the while.

So absorbed were the Hindoos in the ceremony, that they took no notice of us whatever, perhaps even did not see us, though *that* I very much doubt. However, both Trezarr and myself had soon had quite enough of

watching them, and therefore ordered our dawk-bearers to push ahead, which they at once did, though evidently unwillingly.

Meanwhile, with the suddenness peculiar to all tropical countries, day began to change into night, and we had not left the Hindoo gathering half-a-mile in our rear when it was too dark to proceed further without a torch.

But, for the first time on the journey, the musalchee had no means with him of igniting his flambeau, and when we declared that we would "push along beside the river's bank and chance it," one of the bearers almost immediately sprained his foot by catching it in a loop formed by the root of a banyan tree—or said he did; and, as a result, we were brought to a halt *nolens volens*, when, deciding to make a virtue of apparent necessity, we declared that we would stop where we were, whilst the musalchee retraced his steps to the village which we had passed through some time previously, and there procured the means for re-kindling his torch, and a fresh bearer to take the place of the lame one.

After all, a couple of hours' delay was not a serious matter, we reflected, nor to be left by ourselves a very dangerous one; for Thugs (or religious stranglers) we believed to be as extinct as the dodo; tigers we knew to be very scarce in that region, and as for the smaller fry of carnivora, we each of us had a six-chambered revolver and a box of spare cartridges, and so felt very little apprehension on their account. True, one of the huge river saurians might take it into his noddle to pay us a visit; but then an alligator is a slow-moving animal, and sends a powerful smell of musk before him

as an *avant courier*; so that, as we hadn't the slightest intention of going to sleep, there was not the smallest chance, we thought, of his catching us napping.

So lying, or rather half-reclining, face to face inside the mosquito curtains of our cage-like but most comfortable palanquin, we lighted our cigars, and whilst keenly enjoying their flavour and fragrance, began to talk about the strange things which we had seen since our arrival in India.

"Yes," said Trezarr, "you may depend upon it that the useless torch and the sprained foot were all a trick to bring us to a stop, in order that our fellows might steal back and witness some other devilries that are planned to succeed that brutal impaling business. Perhaps some nice plump little widow, decked in wreaths of flowers, and then burnt to death on a funeral pyre. I believe that I can hear the tom-toms going still, so you may make up your mind that we have lost half the show."

"I saw more than enough of it," I rejoined; adding—"And what diabolical crimes that poor tortured wretch must have committed to make such an agonizing expiation necessary!"

"Not at all," responded Trezarr, who had coached himself up in Indian subjects far more thoroughly than I had; "I do assure you that a rigid Hindoo would consider such a penance necessary for even inadvertently eating food out of the same vessel as we had used."

We chatted on in this strain until the moon rose and bathed the entire scene in a perfect flood of soft white light—a light which proved to us what we had long ago apprehended; namely, that all our attendants

had left us, instead of only two. Needless to say, we had not the least doubt as to whither they had gone, for the sound of the Indian drum was still faintly audible in the distance.

Well, it didn't much matter, for we concluded that they would all come back directly the festival was over, and, whatever the fanatics were doing, it didn't lie in our power to prevent them, whatever our wishes might be. So we smoked and talked on, until presently Trezarr descried the form of an Indian creeping towards the river through the thick foliage, and when he reached the open ground he showed up as perfectly naked, yet having a sort of pitcher or jar hanging on his breast, and another at his back, each large enough to hold perhaps a gallon and a half of water.

Instead, however, of filling them at the river's bank he walked right into the stream, until he was beyond his depth and the great jars submerged, when he threw up both arms skyward, with the hands clasped together, and gave utterance to a cry that more resembled the howl of some wild beast.

"I believe the poor beggar was asleep; he looked exactly like it. Anyhow he's drowning now, and he knows it, and also that in all probability he'll be snapped up by an alligator long before the water has settled him," exclaimed Trezarr, a third of the speech being delivered inside the dawk, another third outside of it whilst tearing off a portion of his clothing, and the balance being shouted out whilst running towards the river, into which he plunged without a moment's hesitation, despite the fact that in all directions the moonlight gleamed upon the scaly armour of the huge saurians, some of which were at least fifty feet in length.

What I should have done, if able to swim, I can't say—I might have funk'd it. I hope not, but I can by no means aver that I shouldn't. As, however, I had no more idea of even keeping myself afloat than a stone has, I merely gripped hold of my companion's revolver as well as my own, rolled rather than leapt out of the dawk (that being by far the easier process), and then ran down to the water's edge, hoping that I'd be able to "pot" any alligator that developed an unmistakable *penchant* for devouring my companion, though disagreeably conscious the while that I was by no means a first-class shot, and that I was about to pit myself against creatures whose only vulnerable points were their eyes.

As matters turned out, there was not the slightest occasion for my troubling myself about the matter, for the alligators were either sated or sleepy, and Trezarr, who had perfected himself in every species of swimming in Sandhurst Lake, was quite equal to the task of rescuing the Hindoo, whom his mere touch seemed to render acutely anxious to preserve his mundane existence.

Indeed, from the first moment of their contact, the black fellow turned round in the water, notwithstanding the weight of his earthen jars, and swam ashore with no further propulsion from my comrade than the mere fact that he was swimming after him.

No sooner, however, had he reached the bank and scrambled up it than, turning round, he quivered all over, foamed at the mouth, and danced and raged up and down as though possessed by a devil, at the same time shrieking forth, in shrill Hindoostanee, the following rhapsody, which I will render into English as well as I am able, and my memory will serve me—

“And is it for *this* that for a whole year I have stood chained to a tree, enduring with bare head the burning sun by day, and the unwholesome dews by night? Is it for *this* that for yet another year I have stood buried up to my neck in the earth that is to be my body's grave, with nought but my right hand thrust there-through, so that it should receive the necessary sustenance rendered me by the faithful? Is it for *this* that even another year I have slept nightly upon a bed of iron spikes, just blunt enough not to penetrate my flesh? Is it for *this* that, when super-added impalement, fasting, and prayer had rendered me sufficiently pure to enter into the presence of the great god Shiva, I should be turned back by such as thee, and compelled to go through all my awful cleansings afresh, owing to the defilement of thy unclean touch? But for it my curse shall be on thee for ever and aye! May thy shadow grow less and less until it ceases to darken the path of the righteous! May thy pillow deny thee slumber, and thy food fail to nourish thee! May thy very thoughts be curses to thee, and thy heart a plant of bitterness within thee! Before the waning of another moon may the alligators, which thou hast now escaped, rend and devour thee, or the python of the jungle crush even thy bones to jelly ere it slavers thee with its foul spittle and gorges itself on thee, so that thy remains may never crumble upon the sacred pyre, but be spumed forth in uncleanness and infamy. Go, go! thou art accursed—thou bearest henceforth the malediction of him whom thou hast defiled, and who, but for thee, would have been now basking in the eternal and fragrant shades of paradise!”

Having thus delivered himself, the fanatic stood

writhing for a few seconds as though he was suffering (as doubtless in imagination he was) the tortures of the damned, the foam churned up by his jagged yellow fangs falling about and over him in a shower the while, and then he suddenly turned round, and dashed at headlong speed into the deepest recesses of the forest, uttering a series of lugubrious howls such as a wild wolf driven mad by hunger and the mange might have given vent to.

"Well, I will give any serpent free leave to swallow me if I ever again interfere with a black man's going to heaven in the way which best pleases him," exclaimed Loftus Trezarr, as he recovered from his astonishment at the broadside of maledictions that had been discharged at him. "Turned him back from paradise, did I? Well, I'm sure that those who are already there ought to be grateful to me for that, whatever he may feel individually. Had I but guessed that it was the same fanatic whom we had watched harpooned, and then whirled round in mid-air, I should most likely have let him be. I wonder wherein lay the virtue of drowning himself laden with those great earthenware jars?"

"I suppose he hoped that their weight, and that of the water which they would let into them, would ensure his sinking should he change his mind at the last moment. But you'd better get on dry clothes, and then take a strong dose of quinine, both as quickly as possible, or you'll be down with the fever and ague. Luckily the coolies have left our portmanteaus on the ground close by," I rejoined, and Trezarr at once perceived the propriety of following my advice.

Hardly had he done so when all our fellows came

back, the musalchee with a blazing torch, which the moonlight now rendered quite unnecessary, and the man who had sprained his foot, or said so, walking as well as he had ever done. He declared that he had had the hurt "charmed" away. Needless to say, we had no longer any doubt as to where the men had been. We, however, said nothing, and the journey was at once resumed, stage succeeding stage, until Poonah was at last reached, and we seemed to regain the railway and civilization together, for in our minds we could not divorce the one from the other.

After a pleasant run in an express train, we reached Bombay, and just in time to see the great white troopship *Serapis*—for the nonce a Royal yacht—steam into the bay, greeted by a thundering salute from the Indian and Flying Squadrons.

Naturally at such a time we forgot all about the Hindoo fanatic and his curses, but we assuredly should not have done so had we known that he had made up his mind to superintend the accomplishment of his maledictions in person, and to follow us up until they were accomplished, in as pertinacious a manner as the three priests of Brahma followed up the purloined gem that had been their idol's eye, as described in that wondrous romance of Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*.

CHAPTER II.

A WONDERFUL CITY AND PEOPLE.—JUGGLING AND
SNAKE-CHARMING EXTRAORDINARY.

THOSE who beheld the reception that the great and rich city of Bombay gave to the Prince of Wales are not likely to forget a single one of its leading features, many of which force the most glowing descriptions in the *Arabian Nights* to pale their ineffectual fires.

The pictures in the *Graphic* for 1875 gave a faint idea of the pomp, the splendour, and the Oriental barbarity of some of those magnificent displays. Yet they were such as, subtract colour and you subtract almost everything, so that nothing but oil-paintings are capable of doing them an infinitesimal degree of justice.

And of what divers elements was the scene composed, as the heir to the Empire of India, seated in a four-horsed carriage, with turbanned Asiatics for postillions, rode through the banner-hung and brilliantly illuminated thoroughfares towards the old Jesuit convent at Parrell.

The streets of Bombay were thronged with a variety of races: there was seen the Hindoo, with his huge flat-folded turban of red and white; the Mahomedan, with his round-twisted turban of sacred green; the fire-worshipping, and not as yet cricket-loving Parsee, in flowing white robes, and wearing on his head that nondescript, leaning-tower of Pisa shaped, wicker-work erection, with which we have lately become familiar in the streets of London.

At one corner squatted a heap rather than a group of half-naked Hindoos, whilst close by were the gorgeously costumed, armed, and accoutred followers of a rajah or nawab, some even in chain armour, and carrying a steel bow and a quiver of arrows at their backs; whilst here and there a gorgeously painted and caparisoned elephant, having perhaps a rose-pink trunk and pea-green ears, supported some great Asiatic prince, clad in velvets and cloth of gold, and seated in a houdah of carved ivory or even silver, as high up as some low-shelving roof that was sprawled all over by the nearly naked poor, who, all the year round, could afford no other food but rice, and often perished miserably for want of that, yet who petitioned the Prince to inform his mother, who was their Empress, on his return home, that they were content with their hard and humble lot, in the humour-provoking yet withal touching words, painted on a broad strip of coarse canvas, "Tell Mamma we're happy."

I could fill up all the space at my disposal with descriptions of the animate and inanimate life of Bombay, as it was presented to the Prince's gaze, but I must not forget that my task is to write a tale, and not to attempt picture-painting; yet I can't refrain from declaring that the sights of all sights which struck both Trezarr and myself the most were, firstly, the gold and silver cannon of that little twelve-year-old prince, the Guicowar of Baroda, with natives offering fruit and flowers to them, and evidently regarding them as a species of gods; and, secondly, the black Highlanders of the same little prince, who were a perfect copy of our own stalwart Gaels, with a comical attempt to make them a yet closer resemblance by covering their black legs, where neces-

sarily exposed, with pink and white calico tights, beneath which I feel pretty sure there was a considerable amount of padding, for the natives of India, though frequently possessing superb torsos, cannot, as a rule, boast of much in the way of calves. They, however, had caught the usual swagger of our kilted warriors to perfection, and later on we had an opportunity of discovering that the strains of their bagpipes were just as excruciating to a Saxon ear.

Past houses, some of them almost palaces, and all richly decorated with bunting, garlands, and lamps, and whose balconies were bright with native ladies in gorgeous silk dresses, embroidered in gold and silver, swept the equipage of the Prince, preceded and followed by an escort of picturesquely uniformed native Lancers, chosen from a regiment which had been staunch in its fidelity to us during the trying time of the great military mutiny, and which has covered itself with glory in Egypt and the Soudan, in much later days than even those which we are now writing of; whilst the salaaming, hand-waving, forehead-touching, but non-cheering crowd of thousands upon thousands of natives was restrained within proper limits (as is a heaving and tumultuous sea by a stone break-water) by native troops exclusively; forming no slight testimony, though by no means an undeserved one, to the immense amount of confidence that was reposed in them.

Trezarr and I were eye-witnesses of all this, and of much more, for, having donned our "review" uniforms, we were permitted to join the royal *cortège*, and in it rode almost next to Lord Charles Beresford, then a simple naval lieutenant, but who has since won a fame at the bombardment of Alexandria, and in the heroic

attempt to rescue poor General Gordon from beleaguered Khartoum, of which any Englishman might be proud, aye, as proud as every Englishman is of him at the present moment. We took notice of what a fine, noble fellow he looked even then; but there was a diabolical-visaged native amongst the crowd whom, though he was stark naked, save for a turban and a cummerbund, we presently began to notice much more, for my friend and comrade said to me—

“Bradley, I’m convinced that that fellow with the covered-over basket on his back, and that strange thing in his hand, which looks like a musical instrument, is he whom we saw impaled, and whom I afterwards saved from the crocodiles and paradise on our journey down!”

“Pooh,” I rejoined; “that man’s only a lump-wallah” (that is to say, a professional snake-charmer), “and is doubtless on his way, in company with others of his fraternity, to exhibit his skill in presence of the Prince at Parrell.”

“His being a baffled martyr three days ago is no drawback to his being a successful snake-charmer to-day. He must earn his rice and ghee in some way or other, until time and renewed penances have purified him from the defilement of my touch,” was Trezarr’s answer.

“But,” I next urged, “how—especially without money—can he have got down to Bombay so quickly? We did the last hundred miles by train, remember.”

“And have already been nearly twenty hours in Bombay. Doubtless he has come by train also, though perhaps only in a baggage one. The drivers, stokers, and guards of such are always natives, and would not

be at all likely to refuse a ride gratis to so shining a light, particularly after he had shown them the wounds in his back. For the rest, Hindoos are known to recover with almost miraculous celerity from such tortures, and their knowledge of healing and soothing herbs is immense. I see nothing to prevent his having arrived here hours ago, and all the paraphernalia that he is laden with he could have procured upon credit, I doubt not, at the bazaars," Trezarr argued in reply, and with an evident conviction that entirely brought me over to his way of thinking; for the Hindoo's face, and even his bone-protruding and painfully emaciated anatomy, seemed painfully familiar to me; and when he turned his gaze upon us in turn, the fiendish glare that came into his eyes, though his features remained perfectly placid the while, convinced me beyond a doubt that it was he.

"That man is dangerous," I thought to myself, and, from the grave expression that for the space of half a minute or so dwelt on Trezarr's countenance, I believe that the same notion struck him. Of course the fancy passed away almost as soon as formed; and, even if it had not, the Hindoo had done nothing yet that would warrant his being locked up lest he should harm anybody.

Well, that's enough of him for the present, more especially as the reader may have more than enough of him by and by—Trezarr and I had, at any rate.

As a troop of our regiment, in company with a detachment of another, and a battery of Horse Artillery, were quartered in the park at Parrell, and the officer in command was a personal friend, he invited us to share his spacious tent with him, which we thankfully did, as

it was nothing less than an introduction to Government House itself; the which, though it had proved spacious enough for the Jesuit Fathers, was small for the requirements of a British prince and (for India) a becoming retinue.

The lower part of the lawn, where our little troop was encamped, and especially where our own tent was pitched on a platform of loose planks, may be best described as melting into a swamp, which was most unpleasantly suggestive of snakes, who dearly love such moisture. Had it been situated farther away from so large a city as Bombay, it would assuredly have been tenanted by alligators in addition.

Well, there was a grand dinner-party, followed by a still grander State reception, whereat Indian princes and chiefs gleamed like crystallized rainbows of precious gems; and then a performance was given for the Prince's delectation by Indian jugglers, who perhaps are the most famous in the world; indeed, the present one was by special command, the Prince being most desirous to witness such an exhibition.

It took place on the raised terrace which overlooks the lake, and by the light of a full moon that rendered every surrounding object much more distinct than it would have been at mid-day, beneath the scorching glare of an Indian sun.

The performers were two men, a beautiful Hindoo woman, and a still more lovely little girl of some eight years of age, who possessed a perfect symmetry of form that the inspired art of neither artist nor sculptor could have improved on—a poet's dream in bronze—plump, dimpled, and, notwithstanding exposure to the weather, soft and glossy as velvet.

The exhibition commenced with sword-swallowing by the men, the gulping and vomiting forth of fire, pouring gallons of water out of a quart bottle, etc. Then the woman, who was elegantly albeit somewhat airily clad, filled a common flower-pot with earth, brought her from one of the neighbouring flower-beds by an English soldier, so that there should be no chance of complicity in her design. In the centre of the newly earth-filled flower-pot she planted an orange seed, covered it with a handkerchief, uttered a spell, withdrew the covering, and lo! the seed had sprouted, and had pierced the earth a matter of a quarter of an inch or so. The operation was repeated, and when the handkerchief was next withdrawn the tender germ had become a shrub. Again repeated, and the shrub bore blossoms. Yet again, and these had given place to green fruit. Once more, and the fruit was ripe, when the orange tree was handed round for the Prince and his suite to pluck therefrom.

After this, a common-looking wicker-work basket was produced, the little girl led forward, placed to stand in the centre of one of the huge square stones with which the terrace was paved, the basket put carefully over her, she evidently having to stoop slightly, in order that its rim might touch the ground, when one of the two men (in whom both Trezarr and myself had by this time clearly recognized our *bête noir*, the Hindoo whom we had seen impaled, and whom my comrade had later on saved from drowning during our journey down to Bombay) affected to find fault with her for something, and upon her making him a saucy reply from inside the basket, he caught up a sword, and in an apparent paroxysm of rage (so naturally expressed that, knowing

the villain as we did, our fingers itched to draw our own sabres and dispatch him therewith, lest he should be in earnest and really massacre the child) thrust the keen, broad blade through and through the basket, torrents of blood gushing out under it the while, mingled with what sounded awfully like the poor little girl's expiring groans, all which had such an effect upon the Prince, that he could not help expressing how painful and disagreeable the scene was to him; perceiving which, and apparently afraid of the consequences, the juggler hastily threw down his blood-reeking blade, and kicking the basket over, exhibited, and I am sure to the intense relief of all present, a bloody puddle and nothing more.

But suddenly there came a pretty little song in a child's voice from above our heads, and glancing upwards, there was the little girl seated composedly upon one of the great boughs, with her tiny crossed feet dangling in air. That she was the same child there could be no doubt. Her beauty would have identified her anywhere, and probably for that very reason she had been chosen as the apparent victim of this most clever and incomprehensible deception.

And now came on the snake-charming, which was as wonderful as anything which had preceded it, though it has been so often described that we will not dwell upon it at any length. Two cobras *di morté* were suddenly let out of a basket, and hissing fiercely, raised their flaming eyes and hooded crests, and reared on end as though about to spring forward and strike with their death-fangs at their reputed charmers, who, however, by this time had brought their reed flutes and gourd drums into play, and in another moment the serpents were swaying to and fro in rhythmical cadence with the notes,

and evidently as captivated therewith as is a belle at her first ball with the strains of whatever may chance to be *the* popular waltz of the season.

It is recorded by *The Times* correspondent, Dr. Russell ("Crimean" Russell), that Dr. Fayrer, the Prince's physician, opened the jaws of the largest cobra with a stick, and revealed the fact that the poison-fangs were gone, and without looking at the other serpent, he is disposed to make light of that part of the performance accordingly. Now, the fact was that the big cobra had lost its fangs from age, whereas his companion was as venomous and deadly a reptile as even the Sunderbunds of the Ganges could have produced, and yet it was this cobra that the performers presently coiled around the neck of the Hindoo woman, like a string of glistening gems, and whose flat, scintillating-eyed, open-mouthed head they laid against the cheeks, and the breasts, and the abdomen of the pretty child, thereafter thrusting their own fingers in between its expanded jaws: indeed, the natives are not afraid of cobras, frequently keeping one in their houses to kill rats and mice, just as we should a cat, and the children feed it with milk and eggs of a night, and affectionately call it "their uncle." When thus domesticated, it may even be said to be an affectionate creature, and hardly ever erects its hood, which is its first sign of anger. Even then it may be stroked into good temper by the hand that feeds it; but not after it has hissed as well, for that last terrible warning says as clearly as words could, "You'd better leave me alone until I'm in a better temper," advice which the reader may be sure is always taken.

The snake-charming over, so was the entertainment, and as there is nothing so exhausting as sight-seeing, I

don't think that there was a European present, from the Prince downwards, whose chief desire wasn't to get to bed. As for Trezarr and myself, we found out our host Captain Drewry, and with him went back to the tent by the Dismal Swamp, as we had somehow or other nicknamed it; why, I forget, for first of all there was nothing dismal about it, and as for swamp, it was hardly large enough to deserve such a name.

Stars so large peered down at us through rifts in the foliage of the mango, gold-mohur, cocoa-nut, and toddy trees, as we steered our course campward, that they looked as though they were lamps thickly hung 'neath a dome-shaped canopy of purple velvet, and forming part of that stupendous illumination which had dazzled our eyes for hours, and still reddened the sky directly over Bombay like the reflection of a wide-spread conflagration; from whence there yet came the hum of a vast concourse of people, like the moaning of a distant and storm-tossed ocean.

We thought nought of this or of anything else, when we had once reached our tent, which was as large as those which you see at an English flower-show, and so more deserving of the name of marquee, as officers' tents always are in India, in whose sultry clime plenty of air is a first consideration. There was our "boy," clad in white, and some *forty years of age*, waiting to undress us, and the task didn't take long, when the "bund-khars" (good-night) was spoken, and he salaamed and glided away like a shadow, to work the punkah from an adjoining compartment until the cry of the great woodpecker from the adjoining swamp should proclaim the hour of dawn.

Trezarr and I had a couple of cots in a compartment

as large as a moderate-sized bedroom, and Captain Drewry had a much bigger one all to himself. In fact, it was a canvas mansion; and tents have been pitched on Indian soil containing a hundred chambers.

We almost wished that ours had been pitched upon the actual soil, for the planks on which it had been erected (owing to the dampness of the ground, from which we might otherwise have contracted ague or fever, or perhaps both) were all loose, jogged up and down at every footstep, and in places had interstices between them quite wide enough to permit of a night call from a centipede, a scorpion, or even one of the smaller breed of serpents; and it is hard to say which of the three may prove the most deadly to him whose blanket they may elect to share. And whilst a blanket is necessary for health during even the hottest weather in India, to all those noxious reptiles it is a most tempting luxury.

In addition to this, Trezarr would have it that our unstable floor was raised quite high enough above the ground to permit of a man's crawling underneath it; and though I could not at the time hit upon a plausible reason why any man living should have the least earthly desire to do such a thing, I too became somewhat uneasy upon that score, when, a few minutes later, I took it into my head that a human eye, loaded with a most terrible and menacing expression, was glaring in upon us through a hole in our canvas wall. Our lamp was burning very dim, yet for all that I felt quite sure that I was not mistaken, and equally so that, as I hadn't yet gone to sleep, I couldn't possibly be dreaming, though by this time Trezarr was snoring in his cot with twenty ordinary nose power; it was owing to his trumpeting,

in fact, that I had perforce lain awake, and now I somehow or other felt very thankful for it.

The eye was glaring in upon us from the outside of the tent, and not from an inner compartment—that I knew very well; also that from its height up it must be the eye of a man, for had it been that of a wild beast standing on its hind legs, it would have rested its fore paws against the tent canvas, which would have bulged inwards by the pressure.

Even a tiger's eye, however, could not have borne a greater degree of rage and menace in it, and the fact caused me at once to think of the fanatic whom Trezarr had plucked back from his Brahminical paradise, and whose performance as a juggler and serpent-charmer we had so lately gazed upon.

Suppose it was now his intention to turn those death-dealing serpents in upon us, and trust to their fangs for the working out of his threatened vengeance? And yet I could not exactly believe it likely, for death from a cobra bite is painless, giving only a sense of numbness and icy chilliness, and when it reaches the heart, stopping its action; wherefore I could not imagine that the Hindoo would desire to dispatch his hated preserver in so comfortable a manner. He might be possessed of other serpents besides cobras, however, and a poisoned dart or arrow, fired in through that little hole in the wall of the tent, might settle all scores with poor Trezarr just as effectually.

I therefore plucked forth my revolver from underneath my pillow, and dashed out through the tent door; though all to no purpose, for the eye and its owner were alike undiscoverable.

But I went back to tent and bed, not at all satisfied

notwithstanding, and though I saw no immediate occasion for awaking my comrade, I strove hard against going to sleep myself, and furthermore succeeded.

A couple of hours may have passed away, when it seemed to me that the loose planks of our floor were moving as though owing to some living thing that was crawling cautiously along underneath them, but so slightly that I could not feel at all sure of the fact. If 'twere so, it was progressing in the direction of Trezarr's cot; but as, even if it were so, it was more likely to be a pariah dog in quest of some small ground game than anything more formidable, I didn't trouble to "turn out" until I beheld an unmistakable snake writhe up between the planks, then coil itself into the shape of a capital S, and turn its head this way and that, as though looking out for some snug lodgment.

The reptile was of silvery whiteness, and a couple of feet in length, but the top of its little flat, triangular-shaped head was black and shining as jet, and from this I knew that it was an "outa" snake, and, despite its small size, one of the most venomous and peculiar of its tribe, for, incredible as it may seem, it is nevertheless a fact that the outa snakes always go in pairs, and that if one of them gets killed, either by man or beast, the survivor will follow, until it has been either destroyed in turn or has obtained its revenge by biting the author of its bereavement. Time and distance seem to be no obstacle in the way of its revenge, that is to say, no moderate distance.

Death from the bite of the outa snake is an agonizing and a protracted one. It is, moreover, inevitable, on which accounts I experienced a thrill of horror as I seized hold of my sword, as being in every way a safer

weapon to assail such a foe with than a revolver, and, otherwise totally unprotected against its attack, rushed to an encounter which I would just as soon had been with a full-grown tiger.

I missed my first stroke at its neck, and the reptile at once launched itself backwards at me. I came to the guard just in time to save myself. The next instant it had fallen at my feet, but almost instantly sprang at my leg, which I had to lift up as I dealt it another trenchant, albeit nervous stroke, which to my intense satisfaction cut it in twain close up to the neck.

Looking round, I saw a couple of planks hump themselves up for an instant close to the tent's outer canvas wall, and made a dash at the spot, quite resolved that if I caught a man emerging from underneath the flooring, I would try hard to serve him just as I had served what I didn't for a moment doubt to be his dumb agent.

But I was too late to carry out my fierce desire, for a black, naked form leapt from the horizontal to the perpendicular just beyond the slash that I savagely made at him, and the next instant was off with the speed of an antelope; not, however, before the light of a full moon had shown me four half-healed holes in his back, thus serving to identify him quite as clearly as a full view of his face could have done.

How I longed to make an attempt to drill a few more with my revolver bullets, but I was in a Royal camp, and, except under far graver circumstances, the causing of an alarm such as revolver shots would naturally have occasioned would have been an almost unforgivable offence, even though not a punishable one.

So I went back into the tent to wake Trezarr, for I almost felt, as well as believed, that the Hindoo had

left another outa snake, "the avenger," under the tent floor, who would now play, or attempt to play, his part in the drama, without any prompting whatever, and I determined that my comrade, whose continued snoring under such circumstances almost enraged me, should bear his share of the anxious watching as well as myself.

When I had awoke him, and explained matters, he was perfectly ready to do so, and we sat on our respective beds, drawn swords in hand, until the expected outa came gliding up between the planks, and looked cautiously round.

It was its last look, for before it could assume the offensive it was beheaded.

Half-an-hour later daylight was with us, midwinter though it was, and with it its concomitants of wheeling kites, soaring vultures, howling of pariah dogs, grunting of camels, and trumpeting of elephants. It brought also the khitmutgar, with cups of steaming coffee, the bheestie, with his waterskin to fill our matutinal tub, the huge red-turbanned Mahratta barber to shave us, the roar of the morning gun, the running up of the Royal Standard, the galloping past of the mounted sowars, *en route* for early duty at the Prince's headquarters, the gatherings of whole colonies of crows on the branches of the mango trees, hoping that our breakfast was nearly ready, so that they might all the sooner obtain theirs from our leavings, etcetera; so that the dead outa snakes were at once thrown to them as a kind of whet to their appetites.

Trezarr and I soon almost forgot, amidst all the stir and bustle, both the incidents of the just passed away darkness, and their cause; nor did we trouble ourselves

to wonder where next we should meet our devil of a Hindoo, and come in the way of his deep and cherished vengeance.

Had we been able even to guess, all enjoyment for us would have been gone, at all events until after our escape from horrors such as we had never yet experienced, and should have found it impossible even to have surmised.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE CAVE OF ELEPHANTA.—THE SUMMONS OF THE LOTUS-FLOWER.

WE said nothing about what had occurred to any one, and allowed it to be supposed that the outa snakes had entered the tent of their own choice and free-will. Our reason for this reticence was, that secret orders had been issued to take care that nothing, if it were possible, should arise to disturb the harmony of the Prince's visit, and to the effect that any petty annoyances and disagreeables should be borne in silence and good-humour; on which account, and being fully aware that our picturesque fanatic's hate and thirst for vengeance were confined to us alone, even if not to Trezarr individually, we determined to regard him as a "petty annoyance and disagreeable," and be silent regarding him, but to keep a sharp look-out in the future for him nevertheless.

Now the Prince hadn't been in Bombay eight-and-forty hours before it was resolved to give him a grand

dinner-party on the island and in the world-famed cave of Elephanta.

So the Prince went to Elephanta, and a goodly company went with him, both of the fair sex and the stern, whilst amongst them were Trezarr and myself, though we hadn't been able to manage it without a considerable degree of difficulty, for we were but subalterns in a cavalry regiment at the best.

Well, we crossed the bay in a couple of steamers to the island of Elephanta, which, by the bye, was so called because the figure of an elephant, of the largest natural size, and carved roughly out of stone, once stood at the landing-place, at the base of the thousand-and-one steps which lead from thence to the summit of the hill and the portals of the stupendous cavern; and here it may be stated that the elephant is almost as sacred as the cow in Hindoo mythology, which teaches that the world itself is upheld on the back of one, whom they must surely regard as a very Jumbo of Jumbos.

The sun had set by the time we landed, and darkness was upon us in five minutes; scores of torches, however, sprang into sudden life, and great fires upon the beach as well, which, flashing upon the nearly naked and ebony black forms and faces of our many guides, made it easy to imagine that we were being escorted by so many fiends; the only incongruity being, that we were going up instead of down, and that we looked as though we liked it, instead of the reverse.

The reverse was to come, however, at all events as regarded Trezarr and myself.

The thousand-and-one steps surmounted—thankfully surmounted, I think I may say, for such a climb in such a clime as India is somewhat of a trying ordeal—

we entered the portico of the great temple, which is hewn out of the solid rock, and is a hundred and thirty feet in length, and not much less in breadth. The roof, which is cut flat, is supported by regular rows of pillars seventeen feet high, having capitals resembling round cushions, and looking as though pressed down by the weight of the superincumbent mountain.

At the further end of this vast hall rose a huge three-headed figure, at least eighteen feet high, representing the Hindoo Trinity of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer; and flanking it on the right, but a little less in size, Parbuttee, the wife of Shiva, and in a like manner on the left, Mahadeva, the goddess with a single breast.

The stony and sphinx-like gaze of these huge idols, to one at least of which human sacrifices had oft been offered, seemed to be fixed on the feast-laden tables, and I believe there were many present who thought that champagne, Bass, and soda-water bottles were as *outré* to such a scene as the latest Paris fashions of the ladies.

It was not without its element of danger either, for there was no knowing what or how many entomological curiosities the glare of the torches and the heat and stench of the coloured oil-lamps (which to the number of some thousands were hung from column to column, like strings of Brobdignagian gems) might not lure or scare out of their myriad hiding-places, to play a most unwelcome part in the entertainment; for scorpions, centipedes, and tarantula spiders inhabit all such places, the bite or sting of either of which may cause death; whilst it was hardly to be supposed that there were not inner, aye, *many* inner caves and recesses, in which

serpents or even wild beasts might now have a habitation, for Elephanta is called the "city of caves" by some, and the entire hill is supposed to be honeycombed by them, as well as that the majority have direct communication with the chief temple.

I am convinced that when the eating, drinking, and laughter were at their height, I saw a scaly, hundred-legged, and deathly thing crawl out of sight around a column that almost touched my elbow, and Trezarr declared to me in a whisper that the many bulbous-looking dots which speckled the stone roof high above our heads were not a species of fungi, as I had supposed, but slowly-moving tarantulas of vast size, whom the heat might at any moment cause to drop into our plates, or even down the napes of our necks. As this was not a pleasant supposition, we made up our minds to keep it to ourselves.

The *Graphic* of December 11, 1875, has a capital representation of the Elephanta dinner. I can vouch for its being to the life. Had the artist illustrated what was to come after, he would rather have astonished the patrons of that paper; which reminds me that it is high time to return to Trezarr's and my own personal adventures.

Well, then, during the later portion of the feast it more than once struck me that a beautiful face—a Hindoo face, though not much darker than a Spanish one, as is frequently the case—was taking an occasional peep at what was going on from behind the gigantic form of the triple-faced idol, which loomed in terrific majesty of appearance out of the deep gloom in rear of the elevated table at which the Prince, with the Governor of Bombay and the *dii majores*, sat.

The atmosphere was by this time so thick, and so quivering with the vapours from lamps and torches, that at first I thought it might be an hallucination born therefrom; but when I mentioned it to my comrade, he, after a little hard staring, beheld the same thing.

When it was evident that the attention of both of us was attracted, a finger was laid upon the lips, and the apparition faded away into the gloom.

"Did you see that?" asked Trezarr.

"Yes," said I. "What is it—a woman or a goddess?"

"Was the signal meant for one of us?"

"It looked like it. She waited till I had got my glass fixed in my eye before making it."

"However did the girl get in here?"

"Don't know. Perhaps she is a priestess, and lives away in the back caverns. With all this row going on, of course she would want to come and have a peep; and when she saw that we twigged her she signalled us not to tell."

"I suppose that is it," replied Trezarr; and we went on with our dinner.

Suddenly, however, Trezarr saw a little ball of paper before him, how dropped or pitched there he could not imagine. We both looked up at once towards the distant idol, and there, just distinguishable in the shadow, was the female figure again. She inclined her head, and pointed with her finger, as if to bespeak attention, to the note. Trezarr unfolded it and smoothed it out; thereon was writing in Hindoostanee, which we deciphered together. It ran thus—

"Would you prevent a great calamity, and gain for

yourself great honour, follow me unperceived, and learn the secret I have to tell you."

"It is a hoax," said I.

"Most likely," replied my friend; "but, by Jove! what if it is not? Supposing there is a plot against the Prince, or something of that sort, and we were to miss the opportunity of upsetting it for fear of being laughed at! That would not be nice."

I do not imagine that either of us had much notion of there being any possible truth in this surmise, but there was a spice of adventure about following the matter up, and we had had a fair supply of champagne. So when the feast was at last ended, and the toast of the Queen and the Prince drunk with even more than the customary acclamation, the entire party then rising to make inspection of the divers wonders of the temple, not the least strange of which is a carved group of figures, bearing a most striking though rude resemblance to the Judgment of Solomon, we two "griffins," possessed of not one atom of Solomon's wisdom between the pair of us, made direct tracks for the triple-faced god, slipped behind it into what seemed almost tangible darkness after the blaze of light which we had just quitted, and waited for what might happen next.

We had not to wait long, for a lamp came into sudden view at the end of a dark, narrow passage, and behind the lamp appeared the bearer of it, as beautiful and youthful a being as ever was born of a poet's dream, and beyond doubt the one whom we had beheld timorously spying our doubtless to her unholy orgies over the mouldering and crumbling stone shoulders of her three-faced divinity.

In one hand she bore the lamp, in the other a lotus-

flower, with which she beckoned us; and, obedient to the summons, we hurried down the gloomy subterranean vault to join her, with no thought of harm in our hearts, whatever there might have been in hers, though I am convinced to this day that she acted in all things under orders which she dared not disobey—under a will that it would have been death to brave, a death by the most infernal tortures very probably.

Be that as it may, we followed the guiding lamp for some distance through the gloomy passage, all sounds of the company we had left behind having died away. At length she stopped and turned towards us. We approached. *She blew out her lamp.*

At that very moment both Trezarr and myself were suddenly seized from behind, not by one pair of hands but by many. Vain were our struggles in the darkness.

In a second we were overcome, thrown down, bound hand and foot, and perfectly helpless, and then a lamp was kindled afresh, but instead of its showing us the face and form of the Hindoo maiden, it revealed to our horrified gaze half-a-dozen demoniac-looking priests of Shiva, as we supposed them to be, and most conspicuous amongst them the horrid fanatic whom Trezarr had saved from the alligators at the risk of his own life, and who in turn had tried to take ours with his outa snakes in the Royal camp at Parrell, after figuring as a snake-charmer for the amusement of the Prince of Wales.

No sooner did we recognize him, and note the fiendishly triumphant expression of his countenance, than we felt that our doom was sealed,

CHAPTER IV.

A TERRIBLE PREDICAMENT.

It was very evident the fanatic thought so too, for he began to grin and to spit upon us, and to tell us that we should atone for the desecration of the temple and the insults offered to its gods; one of which seemed to have been sitting down and eating of food in their presence, a more serious one the non-offering to them of fruit and flowers as *juttra*, and far the worst of all that a flying champagne cork had struck Parbuttee, the wife of Shiva the Destroyer, in the eye.

We were told of all these offences in guttural *Hindoostanee*, and then we were left alone in that awful dungeon to meditate upon the fact, that as soon as the Prince and his suite had quitted the island and been taken back to Bombay, we ourselves would be offered up as *juttra* to Parbuttee, in apology for the champagne cork outrage, for they promised us that much before they quitted us.

The subterranean chamber which held us was not much larger than an ordinary-sized cellar, and seemed to have no door. It was of great height, however, and there were holes high up in the probably natural walls, through which the stars looked in upon us, and the cool air of night was wafted most gratefully.

Though there was no door, escape was utterly impossible, owing to the way in which our wrists had been bound to our ankles, whilst to prevent us from calling

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out for succour, we had also been most skilfully gagged. All that we could do, therefore, was to lie still and wonder whether we should be despatched by the sacrificial knife, or by the sacred cord, and whether torture, and if so what sort, would preface our destruction.

Those were my thoughts at all events, and I don't think that Trezarr's could have been a single whit more agreeable.

As for the friends whom we had just quitted, we could hear that they were still in the rock-hewn temple, for sometimes the distant murmur of their voices would reach us, or the faint echo of a hearty English laugh.

Meanwhile, as we lay on the rocky dungeon floor, foul creeping things, and very probably deadly ones as well, wandered about and over us. From the number of legs at work at once, we could conjecture that one was a centipede, or from the rattle of scales that another was a scorpion, a reptile which in these latitudes sometimes attains to the size of a lobster.

By this time, too, our eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, and so we could dimly make out our surroundings.

The object that puzzled me most was the figure of a man, hung up, nearly naked, beneath a projecting piece of rock, which came out from the wall like the roof of an ancient stone fireplace.

He seemed to be sustained by ropes passed under his chest, abdomen, and thighs, for he lay horizontally, with his face towards the floor, and appeared to be in a state of torpor or coma, unless, indeed, he was only a mummy.

He had just begun to interest me, notwithstanding my own terrible position, when a naked Hindoo, with a bald head and long white beard, glided into the place,

holding in his hands a brazen vessel. He came to a stop in front of the suspended figure, and began to utter a kind of incantation, after which he took something out of his vessel and commenced to rub and squeeze it into the eyes of the apparent mummy, but who speedily renounced the character by moaning most piteously, and as though suffering from the acutest agony.

I had no doubt now that he had been a liver-stealer—that is, a wizard, who by the direst sorcery is believed to be able to steal people's livers out of their bodies, thereby dooming them to a lingering yet agonizing death. Once discovered, these Jiggerkhars, as they are called, are suspended horizontally in a subterranean cavern, branded on the temples, and in every joint of the body, whilst thrice in every twenty-four hours salt is crammed into their eyes, and twenty-five verses from the Book of Buddha recited over them; and when at last they are effectually robbed of their fell power, they are used for the discovery of other Jiggerkhars, and also to cure certain diseases, neither of which things, in their cleansed capacities as Detcherehi, can they resist doing.

This office performed, the priest retired, his patient's (or victim's) groanings softening down into silence, and our thoughts had begun to revert to our own approaching fates once more, when all at once an indescribable glow, as of a vast conflagration, entered the dungeon through the natural rifts or openings high up in the wall, and there-through we beheld, spurting up heavenwards, streams of coloured fire and lambent tongues of flame, which fell again in showers of coloured stars, and seeming gold and silver snakes.

We knew then—and our hearts sank within us at the knowledge—that the Prince and his suite had taken their departure from the island of Elephanta, for this exhibition of fireworks had been the arranged farewell; and as if to dissipate all doubt upon the matter, no sooner had the unearthly radiance of the red, blue, and green fires died out in turn, than the broadsides of the Indian and the Flying Squadrons seemed to shake the island to its very foundations, intimating that the Prince's launch and its attendant boats and steamers were already passing through the fleet on the return journey to Bombay.

Alas, it also intimated to Trezarr and myself (who, on account of our junior rank, had doubtless not been missed by our fellow-countrymen) that we were now left upon the island, amidst a host of fierce fanatics, who, burrowing like moles, and hiding like bats in the many subterraneous and inner chambers of the temple during the whole period of the Prince's visit, had seen for themselves that he had offered no worship, or jutra, to their hideous divinities, as the authorities at Bombay had given out that it was his intention to do, but had insulted them by feasting, revelry, and laughter, in their very Temple of Temples, where even the tongue of the ox, an animal sacred in their eyes, had been eaten with impunity.

Well, we were at all events left behind as scape-goats, and we did not doubt for a single instant but that a fate infinitely worse than a scapegoat's would be ours.

We were not kept very long in suspense, for in the course of a few minutes a crowd of demoniac beings came rushing into the subterranean cavern, some of

them brandishing torches, others various kinds of weapons, and not one of the swarthy crew afraid to give tongue *now*.

They surrounded us, with menaces, insults, and blows; they cut our lashings, so that we might walk; they removed our gags, in order perchance to have the pleasure of presently listening to our wild and anguished appeals for mercy—appeals which we might just as effectually have made to the tigers of the jungle; and then they lugged, shoved, and hustled us along in their midst back towards the great temple, from whence came a horrid glare and a smell of burning sandal-wood, with which, perhaps, it was being purified after its recent supposed defilement.

Whether 'twas so or no we never ascertained, for the simple reason that we never reached the main cavern; for just as we had got close up to the triple-headed divinity that represents the Hindoo Trinity, and the two stone goddesses which flanked it, we were violently propelled towards the left, and almost hurled into a smaller cavern, where there was a rock table, covered with dark-looking stains, and an evident recess, in front of which hung a green silk curtain.

Quickly, however, a dozen hands dragged it on one side, and then there stood revealed a most hideous idol, completely filling the rocky cavity. It—or rather she, for 'twas feminine as to sex—had three eyes, as emblematic of her sleepless watchfulness, one being in the centre of her forehead; four arms, to show her strength and dexterity, two on each side, the lower ones holding the heads of decapitated victims, and each of the upper ones a murderous-looking knife, whilst round her neck this apparent Divinity of Assassination wore a chain of

mouldering human skulls, and her mis-shapen body was draped in blood-coloured robes.

I seemed to know at once that she was the goddess Kali, or Parbuttee in another person and character, whose chief temple is at Calcutta, on the banks of the Ganges; a divinity to whom the Thugs, or Professional Stranglers, look up as their especial patroness and protectress, and the only goddess in the Hindoo mythology to whom human sacrifices are still directly offered—that is to say, where it can be managed secretly and with impunity.

In our case it could be so managed, and, without a doubt, we were to be so offered up; sacrificed like sheep or goats on that table of natural rock, whose stains were doubtless the dried blood of former victims.

Meanwhile the votaries of the hideous goddess danced and postured before her, brandishing weapons and torches, shouting at the tops of their voices, and some of them commencing to play on wind and reed instruments, and therewith creating a wild kind of discord that alone caused one's flesh to creep.

Taken all in all, it was like a saturnalia of fiends, the arch-fiend being well represented by the fanatic with whom we were so familiarly and unpleasantly acquainted, and the four holes in whose back, and the knowledge of how they were caused, were doubtless satisfactory credentials of his extreme sanctity to all the others who were there assembled.

Anyhow, he soon foamed at the mouth like one possessed, and still dancing and prancing, leaping and bounding, shrieked out, "Kali is well pleased with us; Parbuttee approves the deed. The law of the great god Shiva the Destroyer declares that the more the

victim loves the life that perishes, the nearer unto perfection his youth and strength, the deeper his cry of agony, the more loth his soul to flee his body, the more the great god Shiva, and of consequence his beloved spouse Parbuttee, which is also Kali, smile upon his death, and abundantly reward those who offer up the acceptable sacrifice."

Then, in response, there arose the shout of "Glory to Shiva the Destroyer, and to Kali, his accepted one. The sacrifice is ready! Accursed be he who holds back his hand." And there was a general and immediate rush made towards us.

But, not to be behindhand in action themselves, the four men who had hold of us anticipated this movement by dragging us behind what I had all along regarded as the sacrificial altar, and the first thing that I noticed here was a couple of stone gutters, or channels, running from the base of the great rocky table to two huge downward-trending holes that pierced the walls of the dungeon-like cavern just below the level of its floor, and which opened into it was impossible to guess what. Their bottoms might be some foul well, or some dark and deep abyss created by an earthquake, or other mighty convulsion of nature; but, on the other hand, there was just a chance that they might open on to the hillside, and have been made merely for the carrying off of the blood, or casting out the offal and the other unclean or unworthy portions of the human and animal sacrifices that were offered up to the idol.

Whatever they were, and whithersoever they led, I felt convinced that they afforded us our only chance of escape, and that, if we would attempt and "chance it," not a single instant was to be lost.

I therefore said to Trezarr, for we were standing close beside each other, "Holes—dive—strike out!" emphasizing my last two words of advice by putting them in practice, and that too with a suddenness and desperation that happily crowned them with success.

Jerking myself free from the two Hindoos who held me, and who, through not understanding English, doubtless fancied that I was only bidding my companion farewell, I sent one to earth with a blow on his nose, and the other with a buffet on the ear, and then dived headlong down the hole, as though it had been into water instead of I knew not what; a moment later I felt a violent concussion, and was sensible that I had given my head a tremendous knock, almost broken an arm, and was rolling over and over down something or other that was a great deal steeper than it was soft.

Nor could I bring myself to a stop—or at least so it seemed to me—for several minutes, though I have since thought that it could not have been more than half a one; but I was at last brought up short and sharp by what felt like the embrace of a porcupine, though I soon discovered that I lay in the midst of a big prickly shrub.

When I had recovered my breath and consciousness—for I had wholly lost the one and been quite half robbed of the other—the first thing that I did was to call out my companion's name, and was responded to by a surly, or else a terrified, "Shut up! Do you want them to discover where we are?"

"No, but do tell me yourself, if you can," I rejoined.

"Well, I take it that we've rolled down the whole hill of Elephanta, and I should say at its steepest part

as well. Anyhow we are within a score of yards of the water, and if we could only find a boat——”

“Why, there is one,” I exclaimed, after just raising my head a little and looking round and about me with an intense eagerness borne of the fact that I had suddenly become aware that torches were flickering to and fro on the hill-side, happily, as yet, a long way above us.

“God be praised !” I heard Trezarr’s voice fervently ejaculate; but it quickly changed into a groan, and when I demanded, I fear rather fretfully, for the spikes of the prickly plant which enclosed me were running into my flesh like anything the while, “Well, what’s the matter now ?” he answered, “Why, I’m afraid I can’t get up—in fact I know I can’t—for my foot’s broken or something.”

That revived me more than perhaps anything else could have done, for I couldn’t leave him there, and I was burning to get away myself; so I struggled to my feet and out of the bush, though a second previously I hadn’t thought myself capable of doing either.

Next I found my comrade, hoisted him on to my back, staggered with him down to the boat, tumbled him into it anyhow, rolled on board myself, tore up the rope that attached it to the shore, seized an oar, and shoved off from the land, and there were a score of yards of deep blue water between us before the searching priests of Kali discovered that we had given them the slip, and raised a great howl of baffled rage that must have rolled far out to sea.

To reach Bombay in our exhausted condition would have been impossible, but we succeeded in “fetching” the nearest vessel of the fleet, were hospitably received

on board, and told by the surgeon that our hurts were of little consequence, and that we should almost have recovered from them by the morrow.

CHAPTER V.

AT BARODA.—WILD BEAST TOURNAMENT AND DEVIL-DANCERS.

BRUISES and sprains are not like broken limbs, consequently, in the course of some forty-eight hours, Trezarr was able to bear removal to the shore, and in five days' time we were both of us quite in a fit condition to accompany the Prince of Wales to the kingdom of the little Guicowar of Baroda, whom at twelve years of age we had found a peasant and made a prince, the polished and courtly manners of one coming to him instantly, and as though by a species of instinct.

It was, nevertheless, a bold thing for the heir to the British throne to visit the capital of such a child, knowing as he did that amongst its population of a hundred thousand souls there were at the least many hundreds of devoted adherents of the despotic tyrant, Mailhar Rao, whom we had deposed, and that assassination by poison or by steel is nowhere cultivated as such a fine art, or regarded, under certain circumstances, as so shining a virtue, as in India.

However, the Prince of Wales has never been known to shirk danger when it had to be encountered in the pathway of duty or of pleasure, by which I mean the

pleasure which in itself is half a duty. A cooler hand with a tiger at close quarters I never beheld, or one who could retreat over difficult ground from the charge of a mad elephant with greater dexterity and *sang-froid*. He therefore decided that he would go to Baroda, despite much advice the other way; doubtless thinking that the little boy ruler of that State would find his throne all the more securely planted when once he had been greeted as the personal friend of the heir to the Empire.

Well, we went by train, and if you want to know *in extenso* how we were received, get Russell's *Prince of Wales' Tour* from the nearest circulating library, and opening it at page 186, I shall be much surprised if you don't read on and on until you get not only to the end of the subject, but of the book, for it is capital reading.

As for my present narrative, my space is dwindling to the shortest span, and I have yet to tell how that strongly objectionable personage whom I must still call "the Fanatic," because neither his name, his position, nor his profession was I ever able to learn, made his last attempt upon his preserver's life in the very fitting character of the devil.

How he came to know that my friend had gone amongst the Prince's suite to Baroda I can't tell you, but I'm convinced that he must have found out, and followed us thither with the deliberate intention and the fixed resolve of murdering one of us.

The *cortège* was received at the railway-station by the little Guicowar, his court, and an immense crowd of soldiery and civilians. The Guicowar's infantry wore yellow coats and oddly-shaped shakos, and his cavalry blue uniforms and turbans. There, too, were his black

Highlanders, with their pink calico tights, and the gold and silver guns, doing duty over again; and, most extraordinary sight of all, a huge elephant for the Prince of Wales to mount, with its head painted a bright saffron yellow, traced all over with ornamental scroll-work, its trunk ringed with every colour of the rainbow, its ears pea-green, its azure-hued legs adorned with huge bands of gold, and its tremendous tusks with broad rings of the same precious metal, whilst its immense bulk of body was covered by the most gorgeous trappings of velvet and cloth of gold, bullion-fringed, and bossed with precious stones, all surmounted by a houdah of gold filigree-work, having a golden canopy overhead, and a solid silver ladder for the Prince to reach it by.

The dress of the mahoot who sat astride of its neck, just behind its ears, was gorgeous in the extreme, and there were besides bearers of golden State umbrellas, and of fans of peacocks' feathers; whilst the little Guicowar looked something more than every inch a king, considering his natural stature, and in addition a really pretty boy, notwithstanding his dusky hue, which was perhaps deepened by his white and azure satin dress, and by the diamonds, rubies, sapphires, pearls, and opals wherewith he literally blazed.

Well, there were many other painted and caparisoned elephants in the procession, which now set out for the Residency, three miles distant, the whole way being lined with salaaming crowds of veiled women and turbanned men, and we noticed that here the bright red Mahratta turban preponderated over all others to the extent of at least ten to one, so that the vast assemblage looked not unlike a field of poppies which our elephants were cleaving a way through.

At the palace the Prince was most graciously received by the Maharanee, the Guicowar's mother, a still comely woman under thirty years of age, who placed a wreath of flowers around the Prince's neck; and in the afternoon grand sports were held in his honour in the immense amphitheatre, wherein elephant fought elephant, rhinoceros engaged rhinoceros, and buffalo charged buffalo; but, save in the latter instance, in a very mild and courtly manner, for the Prince expressly desired that their latent fury should not be really aroused, doubtless through a wish not to hurt the susceptibilities of the members of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals at home.

The big beasts showed, however, what they were capable of doing if urged to it; and the buffaloes would fight in earnest afterwards, and so, too, would the rams, the noise of whose butting heads could be heard all over the arena. Then the naked wrestlers came on, and I question whether many Cumberland men, or Cornishmen either, could have robbed them of their laurels.

Altogether, it was a spectacle well worth the beholding, and once beheld never to be forgotten, though of course, had mahoots bestridden the fighting elephants, and had a female been tied up in the arena as the prize of the conqueror—which would have been the case had the show been in honour of a native prince instead of a European one—the contests of these behemoths would have been of a much more stirring nature. Then, too, the rhinoceri would have been previously goaded into a condition of almost madness, and tiger would doubtless have competed with tiger, or with maneless Kattewar lion, in the arena—perhaps even man against wild

beast, for such contests are not altogether exploded in some of the native-ruled States, some prisoner always being found a willing volunteer, even eagerly pitting a possible death against an assurance of pardon in such an affray.

But our Prince of Wales could not have looked upon such sights as these, and so the exhibition was ended by all the State elephants of the Guicowar—and they amounted to more than a hundred in all—being drawn up in line in all their brilliant trappings, and mahoot mounted, right across the centre of the amphitheatre, and there, first salaaming to the Prince with their trunks, and then sinking on to their knees, both of which feats they performed with the most wonderful precision.

When night came Baroda was illuminated, and processions of masquers promenaded its streets, the Prince and his suite looking down upon the weird scene from the terraced roof of the palace.

Trezarr and I, however, were of so little social importance that we felt free to do what we liked; and what we most foolishly elected to do was to go into the streets and mix with the crowd.

Everywhere lamps and lanterns were waving and swinging about, the smell of their cocoanut-oil being at times almost overpowering. Everywhere, too, there was the beating of native drums, the blowing of horns, and the roar of gongs, whilst of the crowd at least three-fourths were masquers, and the costumes of the remainder were, at all events to us, fancy dress.

Presently there was a cry, in at least half-a-dozen different tongues, of "The Devil-Dancers!" and in another second we were in the midst of them. I must

say that more devilish-looking devils could not very well have been imagined. They were masked, and painted all sorts of colours, for you will never catch a black man of any race admitting that "Old Nick" is of the same hue; and in the present instance politeness perhaps forbade their representing him as white; wherefore the dancing, prancing, bounding, writhing fiends were of every conceivable tint, horned and tailed to any extent, and luminous with, as it seemed to us, impaled fireflies. Their contortions and twistings were simply horrible, their mouthings and strange yellings even more so, and as they brandished, frequently in both hands, lethal weapons of some sort or other, and seemed to have worked themselves up into a state of perfect frenzy, their close proximity was a thing to be deprecated on prudential grounds.

We had either got into the middle of them, or else they had purposely encircled us, and it seemed as though for a time we should have to grin and bear it, and we might have done so had not one of the demons suddenly flourished a knife or crease so near to Trezarr that it scratched his face, causing it to bleed.

He was inclined to let the fellow off with an interjection far more forcible than polite, and I might have done the same, had his mask not suddenly have fallen off, revealing a countenance quite as satanic of aspect, and which I at once recognized as that of the fanatic who twice already had attempted to take my comrade's life.

Quick as thought, therefore, I was upon him, and seizing his still knife-armed hand, I forced and twisted it about until I obliged him to scratch his own face—I may almost say to scarify it, and pretty deep too—with

the weapon, and I might have done even more had not his companions forced themselves between and separated us, though without attempting to do me any personal injury.

Finding that he had eluded me, at all events for the time, I turned to Trezarr, and said—

“You must return to the palace and see the Guicowar’s own physician, for though your hurt looks a mere scratch, the weapon may have been poisoned, and if so a native doctor will most likely know how to save your life much better than a European one.”

“And you?” retorted Trezarr.

“Oh, I’m all right; and as I’ve marked that fellow, I mean to run him down as soon as I can. Oh, here comes the Guicowar’s provost-marshal, or whatever they call him, to learn what the shindy is all about,” I added, recognizing at once the official clad in yellow satin, and wearing a steel head-dress, who was spurring his horse in our direction, and at whose approach the crowd recoiled, and the devil-dancers positively flew in all directions.

In less than a minute he was alongside, and I had told him how matters stood in a dozen words; whereupon he at once called up a kind of orderly, and committed my comrade to him, thereafter saying to me in Hindoostanee—

“You are right, sahib; I also fear the worst. But Sala Jungagee, his Highness’ physician, has much learned knowledge of poisoned wounds, and you had better remain with me and help me in the capture of the assassin.”

As that was just what I was most eager to do, and I knew that my comrade would get on as well without

as with me, I heartily agreed to the provost-marshal's (as I shall still call him) proposal, who, to do him justice, lost no time over the matter.

Within a quarter of an hour we had several of the devil-dancers our prisoners, but, and not at all to my surprise, the man whom we wanted was not amongst them.

The provost-marshal questioned and cross-questioned them about him, however, elicited some important information concerning the fanatic, and ordered them to join in the search after him. Under their guidance every place which they knew that he had frequented in Baroda was visited by us in turn, and at last we discovered—how it would take too long to explain—that he had fled from the city and taken to the jungle; but by the time we had obtained this knowledge it was broad daylight.

Well, all the better for our purpose, so into the jungle we went, and, thanks to some early-up-and-about peasants, obtained intelligence which caused us to believe that, at all events, we were upon the proper track.

Beating an Indian jungle for such game is decidedly an exciting matter, for there is no hunt like a man-hunt, and the ground was so moist that a tarantula would almost have left its footprints behind it therein. Tarantulas, too, were there in any quantity—as big as wrens, as bloated as toads, and squashing a bright verdegriis green when trodden on. There, too, were centipedes a foot in length, scorpions as large as fresh-water cray-fish, walking about with their death-laden tails erect in the air; ants, both white and red, almost as big as beetles; ticks, and, in the swampier parts,

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leeches that wriggled up your trousers and drew blood in next to no time. The snake and serpent family were happily not about yet, and we knew that wild beasts were not likely to have a habitation so near to a large city.

It was weary beating, and though we were many scores of us engaged in the search, it was (or at all events it seemed so to me) a long while before that search resulted in a find. Indeed, I had begun to give up all hope that it *would* do so, when there arose a sudden shout from the direction of a tall taur-palm tree, and guessing what it meant I hurried towards it, and on reaching it beheld an object lying at its foot, which was evidently a human body, though almost hidden from view by a moving mountain of blood-red ants.

When these had been driven from off his face, although his half-devoured nostrils, empty eye-sockets, and ears were still full of them, I at once recognized the countenance of the fanatic, though only by the knife-scorings with which I had forced his reluctant hand to disfigure it.

The blue, yellow, and green bloated discolourings of these markings revealed, beyond a doubt, that the weapon had been poisoned. It had not been the immediate cause of his death, however, for, knowing his doom to be sealed, he had made his way to the taur-palm or toddy-tree, cut a hole in the bark, and sucked at the highly-intoxicating juice that has given it its name, until he had fallen, in vulgar parlance, dead drunk across its roots; and an ants' nest happening to be near, the voracious insects in their countless myriads had swarmed over him, and in his perfect

helplessness had commenced devouring him *whilst he was yet alive.*

"His crime is atoned for—in a few hours more he will be quite a polished skeleton. If your friend recovers the matter will not be worth mentioning," said the provost-marshal; and as I found Trezarr on my return quite out of danger, the matter never has been mentioned until now.

THE "BLUE NOSES."

CHAPTER I.

FROM SEA TO SCHOOL.—"SALT COD" MAKES THE
ACQUAINTANCE OF THE "NORTH WIND."

I WAS born at Chichester, in England, and my father was the owner and captain of a brig, called after my dear mother's maiden name, *Ella Nord*. He used to trade in her between Portsmouth and St. John's, New Brunswick.

I was some thirteen years of age when, by dint of constant worry, I got my father to promise that he would take me with him on his next voyage. We set sail in the summer, hoping to be able to load up and set out on the homeward voyage before the ice could lock us up in port for the winter.

Our voyage was an uneventful one until we arrived off the Great Bank of Newfoundland, when it was almost put a sudden end to by our running into a timber-laden, water-logged, and abandoned barge, in the midst of a fog, which thereabouts is almost a normal condition of the atmosphere.

Our bows were stove in, and we made water so quickly that the carpenter could do nothing for us, so within an hour we were tossing about in a little boat upon the large Atlantic billows, and the *Ella Nord* was at the bottom of the ocean.

The next morning we were fortunate enough to be picked up by a whaler, homeward bound to the very port for which we ourselves had been sailing, and a couple of days later we were landed there.

My father having insured both vessel and cargo, his first thought was how to replace the poor *Ella Nord* as soon as possible with a new vessel, and he was not long in coming to the conclusion that, with the very best materials close at hand, and labour cheap (as it was then), he could build one at nearly half the cost in New Brunswick that he would have to pay in England, and that he could get the job done higher up the river, where the timber actually grew, cheaper than he even could at St. John's, where it would first have to be brought. So he paid off his crew, and we journeyed up the river to the village of Oromoeto, which is situated twelve miles below the capital of the colony, Fredericton, and where new vessels of every size and kind seemed to be perched up in cornfields and meadows, along the river's banks, in various stages of construction; for at Oromoeto the water is very deep.

But a brig is not to be built in a day, and there would be no getting away from the colony of New Brunswick before the ensuing spring, and so, as my father considered that my brain should not be allowed to lie fallow for so long a while, he resolved to place me at a boarding-school in Fredericton for six months, promising me, however, that I should spend from every

Saturday afternoon to Monday morning with him at Oromoeto, so that I might see how our new vessel was progressing.

This was how I came to go to school with the "Blue Noses."

Fredericton, though a metropolis, was not such a one as you could find in the Old World. Government House, the college, and the barracks were certainly built of stone, and also a church or two, but otherwise it was a true city of the woods—a city of wooden houses—some white-washed, some painted in more or less bright and showy colours—nearly all standing detached from each other, rising only one storey in height, and surrounded by wooden palings, white-washed or painted to match the habitations.

Even the big stores, in each of which everything seemed to be sold, from a red-herring to a silk or satin dress, were of wood, and the stone churches were topped by wooden spires. It had, however, broad streets and clean side-walks, and every one seemed to be comfortable and well-to-do.

We had reached Fredericton from Oromoeto in a small steamer, and the river looked as though, give it but a certain degree of flood, it could swamp the city altogether, and drown its four thousand inhabitants before they could cry "Hey, presto."

We took a car to the "Classical and Commercial Academy," which was to be my six months' quarters, and were introduced to the master, who received us in what he was pleased to call his study, which was hung all round with guns, fishing-rods, salmon spears, skates, snow-shoes, and so forth; a sweet-smelling fire of spruce-wood burned cheerily on the open hearth, where

a kettle sang; a case bottle of rum stood on the table, flanked by a tumbler and a pipe.

Discovering in my father a sailor, the dominie's heart seemed to warm towards him at once, and he confessed that he had been the same himself, but had lost the command of "as tight a little craft as ever floated, through a scoundrel of a mate reporting to the owner that I was always drunk, which was nothing short of a confounded lie, sir;" and so, as he could not get another vessel, he had determined to start a school; and he concluded by affirming that he "made fair scholars of his boys, and thorough men of them into the bargain; for he taught them to fear God, honour the Queen, and snap their fingers at Yankees, Frenchmen, and, for that matter, at all creation."

My father had always liked what he called "a straightforward, outspoken individual," thinking that outspokenness and integrity invariably went together; and he evidently relished the idea of putting me in training to be "a thorough man," and was rejoiced at the thought that he was about to place me under a teacher who would not turn me out a "molly-coddle."

"Yes," said that individual, observing as clearly as I did the effect that he had produced, "the Latin poet truly observes, *mens sana in corpore sano*, some men, in their corporations (by which of course he means their bodies), are sane also, that is to say sound. Following out this maxim, I keep the bodies of my pupils sound and strong, sir, and then I know that they will hold, without leakage or loss, whatever I choose to pour into them in the way of learning. Now don't that stand to reason?"

My father owned that it did stand to reason, and the

dominie's classical attainments made a great impression also, Latin being a sealed book to him.

He declared that his greatest ambition was to have "Psalter brought up a man (I was christened Psalter at the particular request of my grandmother, who had a very special veneration for the Book of Psalms), for that I would have to fight my way in the world, even as he had done his, and that an iron pot was much better able to stand knocks and rubs than a china basin," &c.

So, the pair having found that their sentiments were perfectly in accord, the dominie graciously invited my father to have a glass and pipe with him, and then hinted, that while they were thus engaged, it might be a more fitting thing for me to make the acquaintance of my future school-mates.

My father falling in with this suggestion also, Captain Nobbs, for that was the name and title by which he had introduced himself to us, took hold of me affectionately by an ear, and thereby steered me out of the room in front of him, and next through a long dark passage, until I knocked my nose against a closed door.

This seemed to inform him where we had got to, for he exclaimed cheerily, "Ha, here we are!" just as though I had not been made perfectly conversant with the fact already; and after fumbling about for the handle for nearly half-a-minute, he at last found it, opened the door violently, and taking me by the "scruff of the neck," whispered, as I presumed by way of warning, "Fight your way with the Blue Noses as best you can, for it's fair give-and-take with them, but mind the Injun as you would a wild cat-o'-mountain, for he is no more to be trusted than a rattlesnake."

Then he playfully pushed me down a couple of steps,

so that this time my nose made acquaintance with a floor instead of a door, and when I had picked myself up, I found the latter closed, the dominie gone, and about a score of, for the most part, great hulking boys gathered in a ring around me, and evidently very much tickled by the manner in which I had come amongst them.

One asked me demurely if that was the way in which I usually entered a room? Another, if my nose was built in a style that would stand it, and how long it would last at such a rate?

Then half-a-dozen bellowed out a desire to know my name, and when I told them it was Psalter Coad, the whole party screamed with laughter, their merriment rising still higher when the biggest of them declared that it would turn capitally into Salt Cod, for that "nothing could be much *psalter* than that."

He then abruptly asked me if I could fight, and upon my answering modestly, "a little," he hit me a blow under the chin which sent me sprawling, inquiring very politely as I lay on the ground, "if I could improve on that style?"

I made him no answer until I had regained my feet, when I attacked him as unexpectedly as he had done me, and landed him a blow on the nose which fairly staggered, although it didn't actually topple him over.

This made me think that my turn to catch it had come round again; but to my utter astonishment he exclaimed, "Well done, Salt Cod, I like you for that; you're of the right grit, you are, so now come and have some cake."

He then hugged me with an energy that made me wonder if a bear could do it harder; the other fellows

commenced to pat me on the shoulders and back, and finally I was led off to be feasted, having evidently made a capital impression on them all.

I now had time to gaze about me, and found that I was in a large room, or rather hall, whose floors, walls, and raftered roof were all of dark wood; in the centre was a vast open hearth, with a circular railing around it, and a padlocked grate set therein, and looking up I could see that there was a conical funnel-fitted hole in the roof overhead for the smoke of winter fires to escape through.

Around the sides of the hall sleeping-bunks were fitted up, two in height, just as you see them aboard a passenger steamer; but as they were filled with all kinds of miscellaneous articles, I concluded that they were used for their legitimate purpose only in the winter-time.

I was convinced on this point when my new acquaintances conducted me out of the hall that I have described, and which was also furnished with desks and forms, into a long kind of shed, open on one side to the air and a large kitchen garden, wherein was a line of narrow bedsteads, with the bedding neatly folded and strapped thereon, clearly showing that this was the dormitory at present in use.

From under one of the bedsteads, the lad who had knocked me down drew a big box, which unlocking and opening, a huge cake, not as yet more than half consumed, stood revealed, and pulling a clasp-knife out of one of his boots, which reached to his knees, he cut me off a hunk, and similar pieces for two or three of his special friends and himself.

I had a good look at my companions whilst munching

my slice of cake, and observed that they were mostly broad-shouldered, big-limbed, and sturdy, with, as a rule, jolly fat faces, good teeth, fresh colours, not much in the way of eyes, but very well off for hair.

Their clothing was rough but serviceable, and their boots seemed to be greased instead of blackened. Their hands looked as though they used them a great deal more than their heads, and I was not sorry to see this, because I'd got mine into a very similar condition by continually hauling away at ropes on the voyage out.

As they now did nothing but stare at *me*, whilst their mouths worked continuously at raisin-crushing, I thought that my turn had come to ask questions, and so I said the first thing that came into my head, which was, "Why are you called Blue Noses?"

This unfortunate question taught me, through its immediate consequences, that a desire for knowledge, however commendable in itself, may be indulged in at a cost out of all proportion to its value when received, for the youth who had just feasted me on his cake, sprang at me with a most amiable grin on his face, and, whilst another held me immovable by the shoulders, rubbed my nose so violently between his rough palms that the tears began to stream out of my eyes and down my cheeks, I almost fearing the while that he would not cease until he had rubbed my apparently offending member quite away.

However, he left off by the time that it had got to feel like a red-hot coal fastened to my face with some pieces of sticking-plaster, and asked grinningly—

"There, do you relish that?"

"I shouldn't think I did!" I rejoined, feeling I should like to fight him the while, yet fancying that

that would be hardly good manners so soon after eating his cake.

"Well then," he said, "when the time comes in which you'll be downright glad to have that done for you, then you'll know why we are called Blue Noses. Until then don't let anybody tell him, for it might spoil his appetite and night's rest, you know."

These concluding remarks were addressed to his companions, causing them to chuckle and look knowingly at each other. But feeling no desire to ask any more questions, I merely said—

"Oh, if you won't tell me I must of course wait until I can find out."

Just then a tall, slim youth passed by the full length of the open shed, carrying a gun, from the barrel of which hung about half-a-dozen brace of what somewhat resembled English partridges.

He was dressed much the same as the other boys, but wore moccasins. His large dark eyes, long, straight black hair, copper-coloured skin, and high cheek-bones told me that he was the Indian.

"I've heard about him," I observed therefore, as he passed out of sight. "A queer sort of temper, hasn't he?"

"Well," answered Jack Last, the boy who had treated us to his cake, "it don't exactly do to stroke his fur the wrong way, specially when he's got a gun or a knife in his hand, but he's all right if he's humoured a bit, and left alone when he's out of sorts. As for standing a joke, why, Injuns never can, nor play at any game without turning it into earnest either, so that we generally go our way and let him go his."

"Funny thing for Captain Nobbs to let him carry a gun," I said.

"Ah, you evidently don't know yet how the oracle is worked at this school," replied a lad. "Nobbs can't make scholars of us, because he isn't one himself; so he does his best to make men of us, and for his own profit as well as ours. But, after all, that's what our parents care most about, and Captain Nobbs can train hand, eye, and self-dependence as well as any man living."

"What do you mean by his working us for his own profit as well as ours?"

"Why, he makes us provide everything that we consume, so that our keep costs him nothing. He sends us into the forest to shoot and trap game, and on the water to catch fish; added to that, he grows all the wheat and vegetables that we consume, and we sow and plant as well as gather in. As we like this kind of labour much better than school-work, our parents find us very well pleased both with Captain Nobbs and his academy when we go home for the holidays."

"The place will exactly suit me," I exclaimed.

"We are going out to spear salmon to-night by torch-light," said a boy called Penny.

"Shall I be allowed to accompany you?" I asked.

"Leave Nobbs alone for making you self-supporting as soon as possible, though he'll only let you look on at the sport for the first time or two, lest you should do more harm than good. He'll put you in the same boat with Thoma I expect, and bid you watch him closely, for he seldom misses his fish," rejoined Jack Last.

"Who is Thoma?" I inquired.

"Thoma?—why, the Indian, to be sure; though, if you want to get into his good graces, you'll generally call him Kabibonokka, the North Wind. You must know

that his father has been civilized, and so is now killing himself with the rum-bottle. He has sent his son to school with us pale-faces, in order that he might be made more enlightened than he is himself. But young Thoma declares that directly he gets the chance he will go back to the old life of his people and take scalps, and I fancy that Captain Nobbs' scalp will be the first hair he'll raise, for he often expresses regret—in a very feeling way—that he's getting bald so rapidly. On the other hand, if there is any one in this mortal world whom Nobbs is afraid of, 'tis the Indian."

The conversation was getting absorbingly interesting, but at this juncture I was sent for in order to go and bid my father farewell, which I did in the best of spirits, because of the pleasant and adventurous career that seemed to be opening up before me.

My father gone, Captain Nobbs took me in hand for a little while, not, as I quickly discovered, to test what I knew of books, but to find out what I could do in the way of fishing, and such like. But the only sporting feats I could boast of were catching tittlebats and shooting sparrows.

"You've a great deal to learn, I see," he said. "But your father has authorized me to buy a gun, a rod, and some other urgent necessities for you, and I advise you to lose no time in cultivating the friendship of Kabi-bonokka, when he may teach you lots of useful matter."

When he dismissed me I went straight to the school-room, wherein now sat a solitary lad constructing some kind of a trap.

I asked him whereabouts the playground was, expecting that the boys would be mostly there at such an hour, but the trap-maker answered—

"Playground?—we've no playground here; make for the Bush if you want sport. But here comes the Injun, he'll show you."

Turning round I saw Thoma, and holding out my hand, said—

"I hear your name is Kabibonokka, the North Wind, and that you are a great hunter and fisher."

"Rot!" he replied, "they've been humbugging you." Then he seemed to grow suddenly interested and excited, as he remarked, "You've a very fine head of hair; excuse me, it won't hurt you," and stepping close up to me he took hold of my hair very lightly, yet firmly, with his left hand, and passed his right thumb-nail across the top of my forehead, over my left ear, around the base of the back of my head, over my right ear, and so on to the point of my forehead where he had commenced.

A strange gurgling sound issued from his throat whilst he was thus engaged, and a fierce kind of joy seemed to light up his eyes; but almost in a second he was himself again, when he exclaimed, "Rum fellow, ain't I? What's bred in the bone will—but there, that's all nonsense. Left your father and mother quite well, I hope, eh?"

I assured him that I had, and then told him that I believed I was to be his companion in the projected salmon-spearing expedition of the coming evening.

The communication seemed to afford him quite the reverse of pleasure, however, for he muttered something to the effect that I was "too fat for a birch canoe"; adding, that "if I ventured myself in one I should be a deal more likely to feed the fishes than they would be to feed me."

I told him then that I "wasn't afraid, because I was a good swimmer"; and added that "if he wasn't he needn't be at all nervous on his own account, for that in case of an upset I'd not the least doubt but that I'd be able to bring him to shore with me."

I seemed to be fated to make unfortunate speeches that day, and had I but observed the expression of indescribable scorn that I am sure was gradually stealing over the Indian youth's face whilst I was delivering this one, I should undoubtedly have pulled myself up short ere I had got half-way through with it, instead of blundering on to the end, only then discovering that Kabibonokka was regarding me as though I had wantonly offered him a deadly insult that only my blood could wash out.

In vain, suddenly recollecting, as I did, how I had been cautioned on all sides not to offend him, I began to stammer forth apologies and assurances that if I had unwittingly given him offence I hadn't the slightest idea how I had done it.

This only appeared to make matters worse, and treating me to a scowl that served to contain any amount of vague yet terrible threats, he turned on his heel and walked haughtily away.

CHAPTER II.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP.—SALMON-SPEARING AND BEAR-HUNTING.—A CITY ATTACKED BY ICEBERGS.

I HAD now nothing to do but to wander about by myself for a little while, and study the geography of the place.

The school stood nominally in a street, but then the street was about a mile in length, and there were only two other buildings along its whole extent, and they were a small store and a log hut.

The city of Fredericton proper was almost concealed from view by trees. Nearer to me than the little capital lay, on the one hand, the noble river of St. John, and on the other the bush; and as the trees did not grow very thickly, or the undergrowth seem to be at all dense, I resolved to take a wander therein, for I had never been in a forest in my life.

In a quarter of an hour I had penetrated it to some distance.

Everything was fresh to me; strange birds flew about, screaming piteously. But no bird of any kind seemed to perch upon a bough, or to warble a single sweet note. Now and then I saw an unmistakable robin redbreast, as large as a thrush, but shy and retiring, instead of saucy and perky, like its English cousin.

In a perfect shrub of a hemlock I discovered a big grey owl dozing, and from a distance came a strange booming sound every now and then, whilst a loud croaking, as of bull-frogs, was all but continuous.

Seeing, at last, a lovely little stream of water

coursing musically along between banks that were literally carpeted with wild-flowers, I made my way thereto, and had just bent down to pick some, when "snap!" I was caught by the leg and held firm.

I was terribly frightened for the moment, because what had seized hold of me felt so like the teeth of some wild animal.

On looking down, however, I discovered that they were iron ones, or, in other words, that I had plunged my leg into a set trap, thereby releasing the spring and enabling its open jaws to close upon me.

Happily they had not done so with as much force as might have been expected, for I knew at once that though my flesh was badly pinched the bone was still all right.

I was not half so well satisfied by the discovery that, try as I would, I couldn't force back the teeth of the trap and extricate myself therefrom, for the fact threatened imprisonment until the setter of the trap came round to see if anything was caught therein; and who could tell how long that might be?

As likely as not he wouldn't enter an appearance before the following day, and that would mean a whole night spent in the forest, which I pictured to myself as being full of wolves, bears, and perhaps even pumas and panthers, for I was not particularly well up as yet in the fauna of New Brunswick.

These fears of the near future were rendered still more unendurable by the tortures of the present, for mosquitoes swarmed in thousands, and now began to operate upon me as though I was trapped and held firm for their special advantage.

Added to their incessant attacks, I was horrified by

seeing every now and then the vermilion-hued head of a large snake thrust through the grass and flowers only a few yards away.

Under these circumstances I yelled for assistance as though my very moments were numbered; which, in fact, I really believed that they were.

For a long while I received no answer; but at last a great fat youth came bursting through the undergrowth towards me, exclaiming angrily—

“Who are you? and what have you been meddling with my trap for?”

“It’s your trap that has been meddling with me, I take it. Don’t think that I wanted to put my leg in the confounded thing,” I answered indignantly.

“You should have looked where you were going. Leg broke, do you think, eh?” was the rejoinder.

“Leg broke?—No! But it’s pinched like anything; feels as though a bulldog had got hold of it,” I made answer.

“Oh, I couldn’t have set the trap properly if matters aren’t worse than that. By George, I’m not at all sorry, now, that you came round this way and tested it, for if it hasn’t broken your leg something has got mixed up with it, and destroyed the force of the spring, and the teeth wouldn’t have closed even on an otter’s or a beaver’s leg, so they’d of course have got clear away.”

He set me free, but evidently thought of nothing but his trap, explaining to me, as he carefully reset it, that a thick bit of dead twig had fallen from the tree above, and somehow or other got between the smaller teeth at the bow of the spring, and so spoilt the force of the rebound.

His coolness inspired me with a strong desire to give

him a fright in turn. To do so I told him that there was a big snake with a red head just behind him, and so indeed there was, it being the very one which had terrified me so much when there was no possibility of getting away from it, but whose sudden reappearance I now regarded with comparative composure, because my ungracious rescuer was between me and it.

My earnest hope to see his cold-blooded composure change to horror and alarm was, however, doomed to be disappointed, for no sooner did he look round and see the serpent than he made a dash and a dive at it, and then rose to his feet with its at least six feet of cold smooth length passed round his neck like a boa.

"I thank you again," said he; "this'll make a capital present for Kabibonokka. Come to think of it, you're the new boy, aren't you?"

"Yes; but aren't you afraid that the brute will bite you?"

"Ah, I suppose he does bite; say, does he bite hard?" and as he put the question the rascal suddenly advanced the head of the serpent to within a few inches of my right shoulder, and then gave it sufficient liberty to spring upon and seize me.

"Oh!" I cried, as I felt its sharp teeth penetrate my flesh through my clothing; and then I added indignantly, "What did you do that for?"

"To see if it could bite hard; did it?"

"Worse luck, yes. The reptile seems to be a pet of yours, or you wouldn't dare to handle it so coolly."

"Ah, true, but I didn't think its poison-fangs would go through that thick jacket of yours, you know. I'll tell you what, we'll run all the way back to the school, where Jack Last will be very glad to test his new anti-

dote upon you. He's been wanting a real desperate case to practise on for a long while. Do you know, I'm quite glad now that the thing has happened so, for old Jack's sake, for what's the good of inventing antidotes if there's no one to try 'em on, you know?"

"You brute," I thought; but I quickly reflected that it would be madness to quarrel with the only individual who could show me the way out of the forest, and so perhaps save my life; I therefore said, "For heaven's sake let us be off at once!"

"All right," he rejoined; "follow in my track, and I dare say Jack Last will save you from the worms. His antidote's compounded of toads' eyes, skunk oil, badgers' spittal, and human tears, so that it ought to be good, when swallowed in sufficient quantity, oughtn't it now?" and without waiting for an answer he wheeled round and was off, with the snake still twisted around his neck.

How I wished it would turn and seize upon his long nose! With a leg in such a condition as was one of mine, 'twas no easy thing to keep my new acquaintance even in view; and as I limped, hopped, and shuffled after him in the best manner that I could, I invoked anything but blessings upon his head. I was in as mortal a state of funk as I had ever experienced all my life through.

How glad I felt when I had limped out of the forest, and at last saw the wooden school across the cleared land!

Much of my stiffness of limb was gone by this time, and though the pain of my lacerated flesh was still great, it didn't interfere with my running.

Thus it was that I came into the school-grounds

neck and neck with my guide, instead of considerably in his rear, gasping out as I did so, "Is there a doctor near by who can do better for me than Jack Last?"

"How can Jack test whether his antidote is any good if you go bothering about a doctor?" was his irritable answer.

"What's all this noise about?—that thing can't hurt, it isn't the least venomous," exclaimed a voice at my elbow, and I looked round to discover Captain Nobbs standing beside me, with his mouth expanded in a capacious grin.

My tormentor evidently hadn't noticed the dominie's approach either, but, after the first moment, he didn't seem at all dismayed by his presence, for pointing to me derisively he said—"Ah, boss, he *is* green and no mistake."

"That remains to be proved," replied Captain Nobbs, somewhat sternly; and then turning towards me he added, "That lad's name is Tommy Uplands; sweet pair of blue eyes, hasn't he? Well, Coad, if you don't send him in to tea, in exactly twenty minutes' time, with a handsome pair of black ones in their place, directly the meal is over I'll give you such a caning as perhaps you have never yet enjoyed."

He then walked away, as though he was somewhat loth to do so, and directly he was out of earshot Tommy Uplands exclaimed impudently—

"Well, Salt Cod, you are in for a caning, for my blue eyes were not made to be blackened by any such duffer."

"I intend to have a go in for them, at any rate," I replied.

"All right, I'll just give this snake to Kabibonokka, and tell the boys what's up," said Uplands.

"Be quick, for the tea-bell will ring in about a quarter of an hour now," I answered.

"Oh, I'll smash you as soft as a pumpkin-pie in less than five minutes, and make you long for the tea-bell to ring before its time."

So, the red-headed snake given to the Indian, who didn't seem to think much of it, and the boys all summoned together, and now numbering about fifty, we adjourned to the big school-room. A ring was formed, we stripped to the "buff," and went at each other with a will.

Tommy Uplands tried very hard to keep his promise, and smash me as soft as a pumpkin-pie in the stipulated five minutes, but I had been taught boxing on the voyage out by our boatswain Tom Hobbs, who thought himself no end of a "bruiser," and perhaps chiefly in consequence of this, the "smashing" never came to pass.

Disappointed in his estimable intentions, Tommy was soon puffing and blowing like a grampus, and then I landed him one in the wind, and the first round was instantly over.

After he had got back his breath Tommy came up to the scratch again, gamely enough, but with his bounce all gone; and to cut a long story short, in another five minutes I had given him the to me all-important pair of black eyes, though at the cost of a ruddy nose and two or three precious hard face-pounds as well.

At this juncture the tea-bell rang, and I at once offered my late antagonist my hand, who gave it a

heartily shaking, declaring that he considered me a thorough brick, and was sorry that he treated me so badly in the Bush.

We then hastily re-donned our clothes, just as quickly got through a wash and brush up, and entered the dining-room the best of friends, almost as soon as the other boys had seated themselves at table.

Captain Nobbs' eyes were on us at once, and seeing the condition of Tommy Uplands' optics, he called out jovially from the head of the table, "Well done, Coad; that is a capital letter of recommendation to your school-mates; and your being such good friends after it is a still stronger recommendation to me. Never give an insult and never take one, and the affair once settled, let it be forgiven and forgotten as soon as possible. A boy who bears animosity, or goes to bed having the slightest grudge against a school-mate, is not the boy for me."

The table was spread with a couple of fine salmon at the head, and half-a-dozen roasted "despatch cocks" at the bottom, whilst all the way up the sides, at equal distances from each other, were plates of smoking-hot buckwheat cakes, and in the centre a huge pyramid of maple sugar.

"This is something like a feast," I whispered to Uplands; "by George, I never sat down to such a spread before."

"It's all our own providing, though. We speared the fish, shot the cocks, raised and got in the buckwheat, and procured the sugar. For the rest, hot cakes save butter, and the tea, which is the only article that has to be bought, is weak enough."

This was true, but it was to me a magnificent feast

nevertheless, and I was surprised to see how much of the delicious salmon some of the boys left on their plates; but the time came round when I myself grew perfectly sick of what was at first a rare dainty.

The meal done we were all turned into the school-room for an hour, there to learn our lessons for the morrow; but I had none to learn, and so instead had to go about and discover for myself which of the other boys I felt competent to work in class with.

There was a great deal of idling and chattering, and now and then a grinning nigger came in flourishing an immense leather strap, with which he would whack the desks, making a great noise, and declaring the while that he "must hab order and quietood, sares, or de boss would know de reason why."

Then he would disappear, though only to return after a little while, to repeat the desk-strapping, and utter the same warning.

Jack Last informed me that he was the "cook and bottle-washer" to the establishment, and told terrible tales of the atrocities that he had committed when a pirate; but my own impression of him, both then and afterwards, was, that Poenoo would have run from a rat and wouldn't have trodden on a worm.

By the time school was over the moon was up, and Captain Nobbs reappeared upon the scene with a cheery, "Now for the river, lads."

And we proceeded to a boat-house which overhung the St. John.

Captain Nobbs let us into the wooden building, which contained, as it were, a quay of three sides, surrounding water just deep enough for a dozen or so of boats to float in.

Along the walls were oars, paddles, nets, spears, &c., as well as hooks to hang our clothes on.

I also noted several bundles of birchwood torches, and an enormous gingham umbrella, which I was informed was the captain's pet sail.

The boats didn't look particularly crank and unsafe, and I was congratulating myself on this fact, when the dominie gave my elbow a nudge, at the same time saying meaningly—

"You go with the Injun, you know."

So I looked about, and saw him unmooring a long, narrow birch canoe, which appeared to me to be very little stronger than if it had been made of brown paper, and quite unequal to the carrying of my ten stone weight in addition to perhaps the eight stone weight of the Indian.

He was fixing a torch in the prow when I went up to him and said, somewhat sheepishly—

"Well, here I am; I fear that you'll have to take me with you whether you like my company or no, for old Nobbs insists."

"Oh," answered Kabibonokka, "don't apologize, because it may be a very lucky thing for me in case I fall overboard, or the canoe capsizes; for in such a case you've promised to bring me safe to the bank, you know."

He spoke in his best English, with a cruel Indian smile.

He now laid a long spear in the boat, and bade me get in with care, "for," said he, "I could punch a hole through her with my thumb."

I tried to conceal my nervousness, doing as he bade me, and in half a minute more I was sitting in the

stern of the canoe, grasping a gunwale with each hand, and my legs stretched out straight along the bottom, whilst Kabibonokka, having lighted his torch, was standing up in the bow, naked save for a loin-cloth, and navigating his frail craft out of the boat-house into the river by using the butt-end of his nine feet long spear as a pole.

As we shot out upon the broad and tranquil bosom of the St. John, here temporarily expanded into a seeming lake, and with the opposite shore at least three miles away, I looked back and saw that the boats were following us at less than half our speed, a torch burning in each of their bows, and their paddles working by no means regularly.

"I generally spear more fish than all those fellows put together," the Indian presently remarked, in tones of contempt. "Nobbs never lets them come near enough to interfere with my sport."

It was cheering to hear my companion speaking so much like an ordinary boy, for it made it a difficult matter to believe him an out-and-out savage, with a greater liking for scalp-locks than for toffee; and yet there was no gainsaying that he looked the wild Indian to the life, with his copper-hued and gleaming skin, and by this time excited face, for he was evidently about to engage in what he dearly loved.

Sometimes he would propel the canoe along by using the butt-end of his spear as a pole, and just as frequently he would work the other end as a paddle.

I noticed that the spear point was enclosed between two pieces of wood, making it look like a trident, and asked him why it was so fashioned.

"Oh," said he, "spear your fish right, and the pieces

of wood grasp it on both sides, and prevent it wriggling off the iron, as it otherwise might do. No one but me uses it though, for the others would be more likely to strike the salmon with the wood than with the steel, and of course they might as well not strike it at all."

As though to give practical illustration to his words, he thrust his weapon down into the water, and the next instant there lay gasping at the bottom of the boat a salmon of such a size that nothing short of ocular demonstration would have convinced me that Kabibonokka was strong enough to have raised it up out of the water.

After this first success fish followed fish in rapid succession; all large, for the Indian evidently allowed the small ones to go free.

This was a comparatively easy matter, on account of the clearness of the water, which seemed to act as a brilliant varnish to all things below its surface; and also by reason that our torch attracted the finny inhabitants of the deep much as a candle attracts moths.

I now and then looked round to see what the other boats were about.

They had scattered considerably, and were all a good distance off; but I could distinguish Captain Nobbs sitting alone in a canoe of very small size, and skimming to and fro in all directions, evidently directing his young spearers, and using as a motive power, not a sail, but the gingham umbrella which I had observed in the boat-house; and so cleverly did he manipulate it that his frail bark skimmed about, darting hither and thither like a may-fly on a pond. A full moon enabled me to observe all this a great deal

plainer than did the torches, for Captain Nobbs had no light in his canoe.

My attention was suddenly brought back to the cranky craft in which I was seated, by a regular Indian grunt of disgust from Kabibonokka, and I saw that a big salmon was just on the point of wriggling off his spear-head, notwithstanding the wooden appendages.

In vain, by a sharp and sudden jerk, he endeavoured to land it; the movement assisted its efforts, and with a final wriggle the fish was free.

But, as it fell into the water well within touch of me, I involuntarily made a grab at it, and in so doing capsized the canoe, so that the next instant I was floundering and struggling in the river.

My first astonishment over, I floated like a cork; but all the same, my hopes were not half so buoyant as my body, for the other boats were a long way off, and the shore farther away still. The river was very cold too, and I had an idea that I was in a current which was bearing me away from both boats and bank.

All this was very unpleasant, as also was the conviction that Kabibonokka had given me a vindictive blow over the head with his salmon spear, just as the canoe was capsizing.

But presently I heard his voice exclaiming in very piteous tones, "You promised to take me safely to land if anything happened," and discovered that he was close by me, and struggling as though he were going down. I felt that if he was drowned he would owe his death to me, and so I called out to him to float on his back, and that I would try to push him in front of me to the shore.

For nearly half a minute he didn't seem to under-

stand what I said, but struggled so violently in the water that he beat up a perfect foam about him.

This made him a very difficult object to approach, yet at any risk I felt that I could not abandon him, and though every moment I was losing some of that strength which under the circumstances might be so precious, I still trod water, endeavouring my hardest to get him to thrust his hands down on his hips and keep them there, telling him that then he would naturally float on to his back, and would not find the slightest difficulty in keeping his mouth clear.

At last he followed my instruction, and then I looked eagerly round for the nearest point of land, which was a small island not very far away.

The current seemed to be setting in that direction too, wherefore I had good hopes of saving Kabibonokka's life in addition to my own.

He behaved fairly well until we had got close to the islet, but then his panic seemed to return, and he began to splash the water about afresh, and shriek out that he was sinking.

It was a perilous matter to help him now, for he was evidently ready to clutch at anything, but I still felt that it would be a cowardly thing to leave him to perish, and so I swam round him, all but exhausted though I was, and attempted to get a grasp at his long hair, without his hands grappling me.

I failed in my attempt, however, for he did clutch hold of me, and the next instant we were both going to the bottom of the St. John, locked in what I took to be a death-embrace.

I thought a prayer, and remembered nothing more until I found myself sitting upon dry ground with the

boughs of trees waving above me, and the sweet smell of wild-flowers all around, whilst Kabibonokka stood by my side with a Red Indian's nearest approach to a laugh upon his face.

"Salt Cod has kept his word," said Kabibonokka, "that is to say, he has tried hard to keep his word, and is therefore made of better stuff than I took him to be; so henceforth Kabibonokka will be his friend, if he wishes it, and the day may not be far distant when the friendship of the young chief of the Millicites may be more valuable to him than at present might seem possible. Now stay you there, Salt Cod, until I recover and bring hither the canoe."

Hardly had the words quitted his lips when the Indian plunged into the river, and struck out in the direction of where I had capsized his craft.

Of course I now perceived that he had completely humbugged me all through, and here I was perched on a little wooden islet, a mile away from the main shore, and wholly dependent for reaching it upon his bringing back the canoe.

It was not very pleasant waiting in my wet flannels, notwithstanding that it was a hot summer's night; for the mosquitoes seemed to relish live boy, and I was very badly protected against their attacks.

At last, however, Kabibonokka returned, bringing with him not only his canoe and spear, but also all the salmon that he had killed; he told me, with a grin, that he had dived down and brought them up one by one, and had then swam, pushing the canoe before him, to the island.

We embarked in the little craft once more, and half-an-hour later I was back at the school-house and in bed.

When the others returned they seemed to be not at all surprised at our adventure, upsets being common incidents enough.

Breakfast next morning comprised hot buckwheat cakes, plenty of wild bee honey, and a splendid bear ham, pertaining to an animal which Kabibonokka had shot the preceding winter.

Much to my satisfaction, the Indian had not detailed the trick he had served me the preceding night, as any English school-boy would have done, but enjoyed it all to himself, so that I escaped being made a laughing-stock of.

We were called into school by a boatswain's whistle, blown by the black ex-pirate and present cook, Snowball, as the boys called him.

Hardly had we taken our seats when Captain Nobbs took his, rapped his cane on his desk, and the first Latin lesson was begun, which was in Ovid.

The captain would stumble through a line of the poet, and the boy whose turn it was would give the English for it as learned from his crib, and if he didn't miss a word he would be called a good boy, but if he did, down would come the cane over his shoulders or knuckles, and the next boy would go on with the next line, and succeed or fail with exactly the same result.

Of course the captain used a crib himself, for he had but the vaguest idea of Latin, and it was a favourite theory of his that "the old Romans had spoken their language straightforward, like sensible men, but that the Pope (he didn't say what Pope) had ordered all the words in all the Latin books to be jumbled up anyhow, so that no one should understand the language but the priests and the monks."

But if the teaching of a dead language was conducted in so curious a fashion, what shall I say of the manner in which the living ones were treated?

The French class also read from cribs, and by order pronounced French words as though they were English. One boy made a mistake, and very properly called the Palace of St. Cloud, "St. Clu"; whereupon the captain's bile was stirred up on the instant, and he broke forth with "I'd have you to know, my lad, that c—l—o—u—d is cloud all the world over, and that none but a Frenchman or a fool would think of calling it anything else. If the confounded frog-eaters don't know how to pronounce their own language, that's no earthly reason why we shouldn't do it properly, is it now?" and the note of interrogation was followed by a smart rap of the cane.

In mathematics the dominie was really strong, and in arithmetic as sharp as a needle. But the side-lights that he threw upon English history, out of his own teeming brain, were somewhat astounding; and as soon as ever geography was entered upon he changed into a perfect Jules Verne, with his wonderful descriptions of all the places that were dealt with, and the surprising personal adventures which he had had in each.

In the course of the morning the captain discovered one of the smaller boys drawing a caricature of him inside the cover of his spelling-book. The picture represented him in a cocked hat and epaulettes, with an enormously long telescope raised to his dexter eye, and there was written underneath, "His glass is a long 'un, but it ain't half so long as his lies."

The captain spluttered with rage, and at once summoned the black cook, who, taking hold of the culprit by

both wrists, hoisted him atop of his broad back until his feet were a couple of inches clear of the floor.

Let us draw a veil over this subject, though that is exactly the opposite to what the captain did. That the dominie was strong and indignant was shown by the howl raised by the cook, when he caught a cut intended for the wretched boy, who had suddenly displaced himself in his agony.

School lasted from nine to one o'clock, and hardly was it over when three Indians arrived, attired in shocking bad hats and blankets. They brought whole piles of skins (bear, beaver, buffalo, and wolf) heaped up on a sort of cart drawn by dogs.

"They are some of Kabibonokka's people, and come from his father, old Thoma, to pay for his son's schooling with the spoils of the chase," said Tommy Uplands, now my very great chum.

I went with him to have a good look at the Indians, and could not help thinking that civilization did not improve them, so far as outward appearances went.

Kabibonokka appeared to be anything but pleased with his father's emissaries. He seemed to be in a fidget all the time that they were hanging about the place, and to breathe freely again only when they had gone.

To my great astonishment he asked me what I thought of them, and I seemed to please him mightily when I replied, "I think I should prefer war-paint and feathers to soiled blankets and old hats."

"Ah," said he, "a man never sinks into a real slave until he betakes him to the cast-off clothing of his masters. Bah, you must not judge our race by those

wretched specimens of it; they are only missionary's people."

He then stalked away in an even more excited manner than I had ever seen him exhibit before; but by the evening he was his usual self again, and seemed to be almost ashamed of his conduct of the afternoon.

* * * * *

The summer slipped by; I shall never forget the first morning of severe frost, with the thermometer exactly at zero, and the atmosphere sparkling in the sunshine as though it were filled with silver dust or fire-flies, and the trees and bushes all cased in ice.

We had a splendid slide in front of the school-house, and were enjoying it to our hearts' content preparatory to going into the forest to cut down some trees for our winter fuel, when Tommy Uplands suddenly looked at me and burst out laughing.

Another moment, and at least a dozen of the fellows were pointing fingers at me and calling out, "Blue Nose! Blue Nose!" and before I could perceive the pith of their joke, Billy Smith caught up his hands full of snow, and rushing at me, commenced to rub my nose therewith as hard as he was able.

I tried to knock him down, for I didn't relish such rough horse-play, but Kabibonokka seized hold of my arms, and held them down by my sides, and the other lad went on with his work as though my nose was a very dirty binnacle lamp, and he was a loblolly boy burnishing it under the skipper's own eye. Presently my tormentor asked,

"There, have you any feeling in your nose now?"

"Confound you, yes, it feels like a knob of molten iron," I stuttered, wild with rage.

"That's lucky," was the cool rejoinder, "for there's no longer any danger of it's falling off."

"Falling off!" I roared; "my nose was as right and as comfortable as it could be before you meddled with it. It didn't even feel cold."

"Ah, it didn't feel cold because it was frozen," remarked Kabibonokka. "It is hardly the weather yet, but it's your first winter out, and I suppose that's the reason why your nose was almost as blue as a blue-bottle fly."

So I had to change my anger into gratitude, and to thank the rubber for what he had done for me.

Then all the others clustered around us, and assured me that I was at last a "Blue Nose," like the rest of them, and Jack Last hoped, with an accompanying wink of the eye, that "I'd now got a satisfactory solution to the riddle I had tried to find out the first day I had come amongst them," which made me keenly remember the nose-rubbing which I had received on that occasion without being the least bit able the while to understand the illustration.

Five minutes later we were off for the forest, those who were of no use for felling and cutting up trees taking their guns. I was one of those, and I had learned to be a good shot by this time. We wore ear-covers and moccasins, the latter fixed on over three or four pairs of socks.

Having penetrated the forest as far as we considered it prudent to go, we divided ourselves into small parties, and agreed to meet again at the spot where we separated,

and which was marked by a magnificent pine-tree (which we blazed), in three hours' time.

I went with Tommy Uplands' party, and we shot a good number of birch and spruce partridges, but it was poor sport, for they made no attempt to get away, no matter how many of them fell to our fire; so we went off in quest of something, the slaying of which might win us a little more credit.

Suddenly a little dog we had with us stopped directly opposite the stump of a huge old tree, and with every hair erect began barking furiously, but with every bit as much terror as menace in his tone.

"Snake inside, and a poisonous one too, I expect," remarked Tommy Uplands.

So we all began knocking and kicking at the trunk of the tree, hoping to frighten the serpent out.

What was our amazement, however, when through an orifice high up in the stump the head of a large bear was thrust, crowned with such a luxuriant wig of snow that he looked like the English Lord Chancellor rising from his woolsack. We all beat a hasty retreat, but Bruin, instead of coming after us, ducked his head out of sight again.

With his disappearance our courage returned, and we tried every trick we could think of to tempt the snow-wigged gentleman to show himself again in order that we might get a shot at him. But nothing would induce him to humour us, and on the other hand not one of our party had sufficient courage to climb the tree in order to shoot down at him, and the trunk was perfectly intact for at least six feet of its height.

We therefore marked the tree, with "a bear lives here," so as to know it again, and moved off in another

direction; but hardly had we gone half-a-mile further when we caught the gleam of water, and discovered thereby that we had doubled back on the St. John, which was now ice-covered.

We were about to turn back again, when we suddenly saw a she-bear coming towards us, with a cub on each side of her, for all the world like a nursemaid in Hyde Park taking two children out for an airing.

As our guns were now all loaded with ball, we had cheerful prospective views of bear-steak, and also a reward from the Colonial Legislature of five dollars for each snout, for that was then a regular thing, in order to thin out these frequent destroyers of corn-fields and gardens, and purloiners of pork, mutton, and sometimes even of children.

But bear and cubs plunged into a belt of underwood before we could get a shot, whereupon we commenced to beat the cover, some of us not very valorously perhaps, when somebody presently shouted out, "Clear away!" and we beheld Madam Bruin crossing the river by leaping from ice-block to ice-block, just as a man would have done, with a cub tucked up under each arm, for they certainly deserved to be called arms rather than fore-legs.

She was already out of range, and as none of us had pluck enough to imitate her tactics, we made "back tracks," anything but satisfied with the sport that we had had as yet.

So we retraced our steps to the tree where the other bear had taken up his winter quarters, and as we neared it we saw the squad of our school-mates who had gone off with Kabibonokka standing awe-struck, and gazing at the Indian, who was flourishing a blood-reeking

hunting-knife, and himself seemingly streaming with blood from face to heel.

A boy nicknamed Bad Penny came rushing up to our party, crying—

"The Injun's been into a tree and killed a bear single-handed, and I believe he's been drinking the beast's blood till it's made him kind of mad, for he's behaving more like a demon than a Christian, and I ain't at all sure that it wouldn't be for the common safety to shoot him down."

"Don't be such a fool, he's only turned wild a bit; you can never thoroughly tame a red-skin; I dare say he thinks himself a fully-fledged brave. Say, is it *all* bear's blood that's on him, or is there some of his own as well?" was Tommy Uplands' response.

"Oh, there's a lot of his own. The bear has marked him for life, regular ripped up his face and right shoulder; but he don't seem to feel the hurts in the slightest, and it's all bear's blood that's about his *mouth*, for he's drunk it, and it's maddened him. He'll be for killing somebody presently, my word on it, for the gun that he's just picked up is still loaded, and there's that murderous knife which he's brandishing as well."

Bad Penny certainly believed what he said, for his face was of a greenish-white with terror, and he had evidently run off to us mainly in order that he might get as far as possible away from Kabibonokka. Sure that he would not injure me, however, I hurried up to the Indian just as he reeled and fell, evidently from the loss of his own blood, and not owing to what he had imbibed from the bear.

Kneeling down beside him, I could see at a glance how fearfully he had been injured by the bear's claws;

indeed his cheekbone and the bone of his upper arm were laid completely bare, and the flesh hanging down like strips of scarlet ribbon; yet, instead of the expressions of agony and the chorus of moans that would very excusably have characterized a white boy's suffering under such circumstances, Kabibonokka's countenance expressed pride, triumph, scorn, anything rather than pain.

All that he could say to me was, "Let my tribe know that I killed the bear," and on my answering, "They shall," Kabibonokka smiled himself into insensibility and lay as one dead.

We laid back the strips of hanging flesh in their proper places, and bound up the wounds as tightly as we could with our pocket-handkerchiefs; and then one of the party who had an axe soon stripped a great slab of bark, some six feet in length by three feet in width, off its parent trunk, and lifting the Indian thereon we passed three guns under it to carry it by, and with three bearers each side set off as fast as we could go with any steadiness.

Many hands make light work, and we could change bearers so frequently, that we managed to get back to school before dusk, when some one ran into Fredericton for a doctor, who dressed the Indian boy's wounds, and said he would soon recover.

Directly Kabibonokka got better, he began to ask about his bear, and to grow very fretful because it had not been brought in.

To ease his mind some of us went for it, and as the snow by this time lay deep (we should have had Bruin before but for that), we had to make the expedition with a toboggan, or Indian sledge, made of

hickory wood, to bring the dead bear home on; and we wore snow-shoes in shape like racket-bats, for nothing less wide would have enabled us to keep on the surface of the snow, where it chanced to be soft instead of hard frozen.

We found the tree, and the bear inside it as fresh as on the day it had been killed; then with some difficulty we gave his sepulchre a door, hauled him out there-through, bound him to the toboggan with ropes that we had brought with us for the express purpose, and eventually got him home, without sighting more than three wolves all the way, and they were sensible enough to leave us alone.

These were our winter sports, varied with sleighing and tobogganing. We slept in the big school-room with bunks round it, where a roaring fire was kept up night and day. We had plenty of fun in the long evenings, roasting apples and chestnuts, acting plays, and enjoying in general high jinks. Kabibonokka alone took no part in these. Since his recovery he seemed to think that his victory over the bear had raised him to the dignity of a brave. He had won the eagle's plume, he told me, and ere this should have won a scalp also.

* * * * *

The winter passed away, and then we had the beautiful "silver thaw," which came to us as a herald that spring was not far behind, and ere long there came another harbinger of its approach in the breaking up of the ice on the river, with reports as of artillery. No one seemed to take any particular notice of this at first, but in a day or two people commenced to look serious, and the state of the river began to engross everybody's thoughts.

I had no idea of the wonderful appearance that it would present until I suddenly came face to face with it at the bottom of a street; I then looked upon another city, larger, vaster, and infinitely grander than the wooden one which was menaced by it; for this was a city of ice, and some of its glittering and transparent structures were as large as Government House or the barracks.

It was an "ice-jam," caused by a block in the course of the broken pack-ice down river, and by that which came behind rushing at and leaping upon what was in front of it, or else slipping under and thus elevating it, until the mighty and grotesque structures arose that I gazed upon.

Fredericton stood in a plain which spread away for miles almost on a dead level with the river, so that the city of ice threatened to overwhelm and destroy the city of wood, and all that was therein, and nobody could tell to an hour when the catastrophe might happen.

There was a panic, and the timid fled with their wives and families to the dozen miles away hills, leaving their possessions behind, for the roads were still impassable for carts or waggons, and the snow had become so soft that only the lightest laden of sleighs could traverse it; indeed, the snow was melting so quickly, thus adding to the volume of water in the river, that it formed a great and superadded danger of itself, by rendering an overflow and a consequent ice-invasion all the more certain.

Captain Nobbs was one of the few who laughed this danger to scorn; he declared that he had never heard or read of ice knocking down houses, and therefore that such a thing could not happen.

Kabibonokka, however, thought differently, and as we all of us pinned more faith in the Indian boy's instincts than in our nautical dominie's wisdom, we began to feel mighty uncomfortable.

As it turned out we had ample cause for our apprehensions, for one night we heard a quick succession of booming sounds, mingling with a crackling as of rapid firing, which we felt convinced was the pack-ice giving way before the bergs, and consequently the commencement of the battle between ice and wood.

We rushed out of the premises and floundered into water up to our knees, and looking riverward, we could see a perfect fleet of icebergs floating down (looking like great white-sailed ships in the starlight) over what the day before had been a snow-covered plain, and, as it seemed to us, directly upon the school-house.

The water seemed to be rapidly increasing in depth around us, and drowning to be consequently imminent.

It was then that Kabibonokka suddenly bethought him of a great hillock, about a quarter of a mile distant, which might possibly afford us safety; so following him we made for it, and found it to be now an island, with its top not more than nine feet above the rapidly rising waters. However, we could get no further, for it was the highest point of land for at least a dozen miles around; so there we took our last stand.

The moon now rose, and showed us the roofs of Government House, the barracks, and the High School swarming with heads. All these were strong stone buildings, and undoubtedly those who had taken refuge on them felt that they were quite safe.

We school-boys envied them such convictions, for *our*

sensations were those of blank despair, and some fellows acted as though they were going mad.

Meanwhile the terrible noise of wooden houses being levelled, as it seemed to us by whole streets at a time, was continuous, and presently we beheld one of our own wooden outbuildings rammed by a berg, and go down like a house built of cards before it.

We all gazed breathlessly, expecting every instant to see the school fall next, when suddenly there was a roar as though the solid earth itself was being rent asunder, and directly it had ceased a wild cheer reached our ears.

Jack Last echoed it, and told the rest of us that the ice-jam across the river had given way, and that we were consequently saved; and soon we saw the nearest bergs retire from the school instead of advancing upon it.

Then, as the full moon rose higher in the heavens, it showed us the ice-hills and mountains which for so long had threatened us rolling onwards in tumultuous confusion, and with deafening noise, towards the sea.

An hour later we were back in our beds again, and so ended the last incident particularly worth mentioning that marked my six months' schooling at Fredericton; for with May and the opening of the navigation, our new vessel, called, like the old one, *Ella Nord*, was ready to put to sea, so I was summoned to rejoin her.

* * * * *

I didn't take another trip to the land of the "Blue Noses" for some years, but when I did, I ran up to Fredericton, where I found Captain Nobbs retired on a competency, and the ex-pirate and ex-cook now sporting a very gorgeous livery.

The captain seemed glad to see me, and was hospi-

able in the extreme ; but I could learn nothing of any of my old school-fellows save Kabibonokka, who had, on his father's death, joined his tribe, and made war on the Mic Macs, another tribe at a little distance, whom he and his braves seem to have thrashed most unmercifully ; but eventually he had turned his arms against the Government, and paid the penalty with his life.

SAVED BY SHADOWS.

CHAPTER I.

I RUN AWAY FROM HOME WITH A TRAVELLING SHOWMAN.

I WAS born and reared in the beautiful city of Sydney, the capital of New South Wales, and therefore I'm a "cornstalk." Yes, Australian boys are nicknamed cornstalks because they grow so quickly, and shoot up so tall and so thin, but they fill out and make fine men, for all that—only give them time.

For the rest I expect they are very much like other boys, only, perhaps, a little more free-and-easy and self-dependent, for they go to school, and play football and cricket, and run, and row, and ride,—especially ride, for up-country you can often buy a decent horse for half-a-crown, and if you don't happen to live in a town, you can turn him loose to graze in the bush, and so his food costs next to nothing.

I know, from what I've read, that English boys are as foolish as us "cornstalks" in many things, and often want to be anything rather than what their parents know it's best that they *should* be. Some are mad to

become soldiers, and others to run away to sea, whilst not a few, who have been to a theatre or a circus, think that if they could become actors or star riders, they'd be as happy as the days are long.

Well, not so very many years ago I was a young chuckle-head of the last kind, and was show mad. I would follow a circus procession throughout its entire perambulation of the city, forgetful of my dinner, and the certain thrashing that I should receive for missing afternoon school, whilst as for the theatre, I'd willingly have starved myself a whole fortnight to win the honour of carrying a banner in a procession, or to be a frog or a rat in the Christmas pantomime, for we've two stunning theatres at Sydney, I can tell you, and the performances are first-class, and no mistake.

My lot was not destined to be cast at either circus or theatre, however. It was to be a much more humble one; yet, when the chance came, I jumped at it as eagerly as a barracouta jumps at a flying-fish, and the consequence was that I was as thoroughly *taken in* as is the aforesaid flying-fish, when the barracouta's jaws once close on it. I was not so much *down in the mouth*, however, for, on the contrary, I was elated with joy.

The thing happened in this manner. I was wandering one evening about Woolloomooloo, one of our prettiest suburbs, when I came upon a shabby little hall, whose doors were, for a wonder, open, whilst above them was an illuminated transparency, representing two bodies of Australian savages brandishing spears, waddies, and boomerangs, and about to meet in deadly encounter, one band being led on by an enormous black giant, and the other by a wild white man, attired, or rather *un*-attired, like his sable companions.

Underneath this picture was painted in big, striking letters: "Panorama of the wonderful adventures of James Moril, the shipwrecked British sailor, and wild white man. Reserved seats, 2s. Front seats, 1s. Back seats, 6d. An extraordinary spectacle that no one should miss witnessing."

I thought the last remark very sensible, and I was quite willing to act up to the advice therein contained; but then I'd only a penny about me, and the lowest charge of admission was sixpence. That was decidedly awkward.

Not many people seemed to be going in, so the short squat man in the open doorway, who was dressed in a very large plaid suit, and wore drab boots, a high white hat, and a bright scarlet neck-tie, banged a huge drum and yelled forth the monster attractions of his exhibition by turns. Then all at once his eyes rested on me, and understanding, perhaps, my eager looks, he called me up to him, and said—

"Like to see the show?"

"Yes, sir," I rejoined.

"Then," said this Good Samaritan, as he fished a handful of papers out of a big side-pocket, "get inside and sell as many of these programmes as you can for a penny apiece. Look sharp about it, and bring me the money behind the curtain when you can't get no more."

Never was command so joyfully obeyed. I seemed as though treading on air instead of on a remarkably dusty floor; and never, perhaps, have I felt so proud, before or since, as I was whilst disposing of that handful of penny programmes, for it seemed to me at the time that by the act I claimed a kind of kindred with the

wild white man, and that a portion of his fame and glory was reflected on myself.

When the room was about half-full, and no more would come in, the man in the white hat and plaid suit closed the door, bustled down the hall, mounted on a kind of stage, and then, after beckoning to me, passed behind a great white sheet of stretched canvas that covered the end of the hall.

As soon as I had joined him, and given him the money I had received, and the bills I hadn't disposed of, he seemed pleased, and told me I was a good boy, and should manage the thunder and lightning as a reward, which rather frightened me, until he explained that a large sheet of tin, well shaken, would make the thunder, and half-a-dozen tiny heaps of grey powder on a tray (to be ignited, one at a time, with a common lucifer match), the flashes of lightning that would precede the thunder-peals.

Well, I saw the wonderful exhibition, and I played my humble part in it, though I esteemed it quite the reverse of humble at the time. It was but a magic-lantern affair after all, showing, in a succession of views, the adventures amongst Queensland savages of a sailor, who was the sole survivor of a wreck on that inhospitable coast, and whose life had been spared by these blacks, whom he lived with until he forgot even his own tongue. I have since learnt that his was a true story, but I think this show dressed the actual facts up in a pretty voluminous garb of fiction.

I didn't think so then, but swallowed everything with as great avidity and as implicit faith as nervous old ladies swallow homœopathic pills, and when the exhibitor called the magic-lantern a phantasmagoria, I surveyed it

with as much awe as though it had been a Krupp gun or a Woolwich infant, both which awful instruments of destruction I had read of.

The performance over, I would have gone out with the crowd, had not the owner of the exhibition detained me.

"I've taken a fancy to you, my lad," said he, "and I feel a great inclination to make your fortune. How would you like to travel with me and—the show, eh?"

I was so filled with rapture at the very thought that I couldn't answer him.

The artful rascal saw how I took the bait, and at once went on with—

"It'll be a good thing for you, and I'm sure I don't know how I come to be so good-natured. Dear me! what thousands of miles you'll travel, and what strange and wonderful sights you'll see. I'm going from here straight away to the north, where pine-apples grow in the fields just like cabbages, and may be had for the picking. You'll have to work, of course, but if you'll go I'll make you my pardner instead of my servant, and instead of vulgar wages—for I can see with half an eye that you are a little gentleman—you shall have—let me think—a twentieth part of the profits after all expenses of every kind are paid. By George! you'll soon make your fortune at that rate; and when you returns to your parents with diamond rings on your fingers, a gold watch and chain, and every pocket a-bulging out with bank-notes, they'll commend you for running away from 'em now without a word of leave-taking."

To cut a long story short, Horatio Mortimer at last persuaded me to take the most foolish and wicked step that any boy possibly can take, namely, to run away from

home; it no more striking me that his real object was to obtain a willing drudge who would expect no payment for anything that he did, than that his real name was Daniel Sluggs, or that the entire profits of his concern were next to nil.

CHAPTER II.

I FIND TO MY SURPRISE THAT ALL IS NOT GOLD
THAT GLITTERS.

I MIGHT not have gone with Mortimer, *alias* Sluggs, had I not received a severe thrashing from my father on arriving home for returning so late, and felt inwardly convinced that I should get another at school the following morning for not having prepared my lessons over-night.

These two straws checked any repentance on my part, so that though I went to bed much later than usual I was up with the sun, and half-an-hour later stole out of the house with my best suit and my money-box in a small hand-bag, having first pinned to my toilet-cloth a scrap of paper, on which I had scrawled with a very blunt pencil—

*"Gone to make my fortune ; will come back as soon as
it's done."*

If this may seem a heartless way of saying good-bye to my parents, I didn't intend it for such. The bit of paper wouldn't hold more, and I was too agitated to

write more even had it been a larger scrap. My heart was in my mouth, as the saying is, not only until I was out of the house, but even until I had turned the corner of the next street; nor was I quite myself before I had crossed Hyde Park, and got half-way up South Head Road in the direction of Surrey hills.

Here, at a spot which had been appointed between us over-night, I met Horatio Mortimer. But he was no longer the imposing-looking individual of the evening before; for his morning toilet was shabby, his high black hat greasy, and the worse for sundry dents, whilst his throat and wrists were innocent of cuff and collar, and his eyes red, as though he had been carousing all night.

He received me very graciously, however, called me a trump and a Trojan, which I accepted as high compliments, and when he asked me what I had in the bag, and I told him my best suit of clothes and my money-box, he was even good enough to say that he'd take charge of the latter, lest I should get robbed of it.

We jogged along, side by side, until we got to a stable-yard belonging to a third-class inn in Brickfields, and here Mortimer told me to walk on alone as straight as ever I could go, and that by the time I'd got well out into the country he'd overtake me in his trap, and then I should ride alongside him.

To hear was, of course, to obey; so away I started, with a light heart and empty hands, for he had taken charge of my bag and its belongings, and I never had it or them again in my own possession from that time forth.

When I had got well out into the bush, or what Mortimer, being an Englishman, called the country, I

seated myself on a little mound under a blue gum tree, and waited for my companion to come up, for the morning was very close and sultry, and a hot wind had commenced to blow.

Had my thoughts been less busy with the future I should have noticed that the hillock was a white ants' nest, such ants being as large as bees, and so strong in the jaws, that from that fact and their colour they are called bull-dogs.

As it turned out, they let me know what good right they had to the name before many minutes were over, making me feel as if red-hot needles were being thrust into my calves, so that in a twinkling I was dancing like a bear on hot bricks, with my trousers torn off and waving inside out in my hands, and my shirt fluttering in the air.

Hardly had I got rid of the bull-dogs, when I heard a sound that caused my flesh to creep, so terrible was it, but as 'twas followed by a peal of laughter, my fear was somewhat allayed; and venturing to glance in its direction, I saw Horatio Mortimer seated in a vehicle which seemed to be half cart and half buggy, and which was being dragged slowly along by evidently the very animal that had given vent to the lion-like roar, and which, from pictures I had seen, I now knew to be a donkey; but it was the first I had ever beheld alive, and I didn't like the idea of getting up behind it very much.¹

But I wasn't asked to enter the vehicle yet, for "my

¹ When the author of this story edited the *Hobart Town Fun* in that city in 1867, the only donkey in Tasmania belonged to a costermonger there, and its unfamiliar bray made it a terror to all the horses in the place, and was the cause of numerous accidents.

partner," after he had laughed at my appearance, and inquired whether I "called those things legs or broom-sticks, and if I was practising to be a wild white man, like Moril?" signed to me to go deeper into the bush, which, when I had pulled on my trousers again, I did, whilst he followed me up in the cart until the road was quite lost to our view.

Then, when we had nothing but the big trees with their dark-green leaves and snow-white trunks around us, he got down out of the trap, told Lion, that was the donkey, to stand still, which he seemed quite tame enough to do, and then taking a couple of small bottles and a comb, a tooth-brush, and a paint-brush out of his pocket, he said he was going "to make me a handsome boy, who the pretty young ladies would take a fancy to," and straightway proceeded to it.

Hair-dye and some kind of skin-staining liquid were the ingredients that effected this transformation; and a very effectual one it was, for my parsnip-hued hair was soon as black as a crow's plumage, and a complexion that had been very like that of a trussed fowl's changed to one of almost Egyptian darkness.

"Now," said my new friend and benefactor, when he had completed his task, and shown me my reflection in a little pocket mirror that he had about him, "I don't think your own father or mother would know you; and so if the traps¹ are sent to hunt you up, there's little chance of their finding you out, even if they stare in your face with your phottygraff in their hands; but to make it all the more safe you shall pass for my son, and answer to the pretty name of Aubrey Mortimer. What do you say to that?"

¹ Police.

I can't remember *what* I said now, but I remember that I was highly delighted, both with my change of appearance and name, for, in point of fact, I was plain James Smith, and in general hailed as Jemmy Smith, that is to say when I wasn't called "Parsnips," or "Young Ironmoulds," appellations which I had owed to the colour of my hair and my freckles, and which had been the cause of many fights, in only about a third of which I had come off victor.

When I had thus been made "handsome and unrecognizable," I was invited to mount the vehicle, which I did with some misgiving, owing to the strange animal that was in the shafts, for I verily believe that at that time there were not half-a-dozen donkeys in all Australia, nor were they needed where horses were so cheap and plentiful that even beggars could ride.

Before we got back into the high-road I discovered that the vehicle contained, besides our two selves, the magic-lantern, the great box of slides, the rolled-up sheet of white canvas, huge bundles of bills and posters, a pot of paste and a brush, and lastly, a large shabby portmanteau, in company with my natty little one.

My partner was very pleasant as we drove along towards the town of Parramatta, nine miles distant, where we were to exhibit that night, and did his best to prevent my experiencing any sorrow at leaving home.

He was full of schemes for making a fortune too, one of which was to paint me all over, and exhibit me as a spotted wild boy from the at that time fully believed in great interior deserts, and to change the donkey into a kind of striped zebra, representing it as the steed upon which I had approached the confines of civilization

(from the same then unknown and unexplored region) on the occasion of my capture.

"When I travelled with a circus in the old country, I was a great hand at making up them beautiful spotted horses, which is, in most cases, all paint, and folks see so little of mokes—that's to say, donkeys—in Australia, that we could pass Lion off as pretty nigh anything except a white elephant, and we might even make him pass muster as a young 'un of that species, if we could only take off his tail, and splice it on to his nose."

I fought shy of being "a spotted wild boy from the sandy deserts of the interior," however, for the scheme presented itself to me as an imposition and a swindle, and I did sufficient credit to my bringing up to set my face firmly against it on that account.

I didn't seem to rise in Mr. Mortimer's good opinion by my "want of enterprise," as he termed it; "but," he added with a grin, "as I was his partner, of course I had a right to give an opinion."

Before a month was over (for I have neither space nor leisure to describe our early trials and performances in detail, so much of weird peril and adventure is there to tell of as happening at a later date) I had begun to doubt whether any fortune was to be made as Mr. Mortimer's partner, and to be at times bitterly sorry that I had ever left my comfortable home.

Long before that time I had discovered that I was the working partner, and he the sleeping one. On the road I had to whack and steer the donkey, the one a hard and the other a difficult task, for the brute was as lazy and self-willed as he could be, and before entering the next town I had to draw a little way off the road, in order that I might put on my best clothes, arrayed in

which I had then to push ahead on foot, and on the strength of my "young gentlemanly" appearance, bargain for board and lodging (whilst we remained in the place), where no payment would be demanded on account, which Mortimer had explained to me "it was beneath the dignity of travelling professionals to submit to."

As soon as I had in this manner played the part of jackal to my partner, the lion, I had again, on the strength of my respectability of appearance, to secure a place for our entertainment, paying half-a-sovereign as a deposit for the rent of the hall or room, as though that was the usual thing with us, instead of a guinea. And then I had to discover the bar parlour and contiguous stable in which my partner and our steed had by this time located themselves, and after reporting progress to the former, to go and see that the latter was fed, to again don my seedier apparel, rumple my hair, and soil my face and hands, preparatory to issuing forth with the paste-pot and a great roll of posters, in the capacity of bill-sticker; at which task I had not only to perambulate each street of the town, seizing upon every yard of blank wall for our announcements, but, if the place was small, to trudge a mile or so out along each road leading therefrom, to enable the great smooth trunks of the gum-trees to also tell the tale.

By the time I got back to the stable, made myself look decent again, and repaired to our lodgings (once more in the character of a young gentleman), dinner was generally over, and what had been put by for myself had grown lukewarm, or dried up to nothing in the oven; and, in any case, directly I had bolted it I had to hurry off with Mortimer to the hall, to help him to arrange

everything for the night, our respective shares of the labour generally being that he would smoke and direct, and I would practically perform.

As soon as all things were ready it was time to get back to tea, and, in general, I had to scald my throat with the second cup, so that the door of the hall should be opened in time (my task again) to let in the expectant crowds, before they burst it down in their eagerness to secure good places, Mortimer presently coming along with the lodging or boarding-house mistress, or some of her daughters, to whom he had offered a complimentary admission, a courtesy which, as I afterwards discovered, they in nine cases out of ten had to reciprocate the next morning by permitting us to depart after paying only half the amount of our bill for bed and board, &c., the excuse always being, that the "house the night before had been such an unexpectedly bad one, that it really had not paid our expenses; but in three months' time we should be returning that way, and then we would defray the balance of what was now owing, and pay for our then accommodation in *advance*," &c., &c.

In this plausible manner, and he really was very plausible, my partner would make half-a-sovereign pay for two dinners, teas, suppers, beds, and breakfasts, with frequently sundry glasses of hot brandy-and-water as well; whilst, provided we could only get all our traps and belongings out of the hall in time (a task which frequently engaged *me* up to midnight), the ten-shilling deposit would be all that the proprietors or shareholders would obtain for its use, gas included.

But though we didn't pay, as a rule, half what we should have done, we didn't half fill our own pockets either, and I soon began to discover that my twentieth

share of the profits would never send me back to my parents with a gold watch, a diamond ring, and my pockets bulged out with bank-notes, as had been promised.

By the time I was *fully* convinced on this point, however, we were so far away from Sydney, that to return, like the repentant prodigal, without money to pay coach or steamboat fare, would have been impossible; and Mortimer never let me have sufficient in my possession at one time to accomplish half or even a quarter of the distance.

He continued, however, to be kind to me after his manner, though, had I consented to be a spotted wild boy, I think he would have been kinder; and our show certainly required *some* new attraction.

One day he said to me, when we had worked pretty well the whole colony, and dared not return on our tracks—

“Aubrey, my boy, I’ve made up my mind that we’ll take ship for Queensland; the towns are newer there, and the country ain’t overrun yet with exhibitions. Come, cheer up, for that’s the land where pine-apples grow in the fields like cabbages, acres of them together, and tobacco in like manner. I want a native mummy too, and they’re to be found in the trees occasionally, I’ve heard; and if I could also lay hold of a young native as couldn’t talk our lingo, I’d have a spotted wild boy ready to hand; and the mummy and the boy together would make our fortins in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, not even counting the zebra.”

Well, the long and the short of it was, that the next day we exhibited at Newcastle (celebrated for its coals), and the one after that sailed from that port for Brisbane

aboard the inter-colonial steamer *Wonga Wonga* (cart, donkey, and all), going as deck passengers, at the cheapest possible rate. But Mortimer consoled himself for present discomforts by vowing that we'd return in the saloon.

Little did either of us imagine what perils we would have to encounter before a chance of returning presented itself.

CHAPTER III.

QUEENSLAND JUSTICE.—IN THE LAND OF THE SAVAGE.

FORTY-EIGHT hours after leaving Newcastle we entered Moreton Bay, and steamed up its magnificent expanse of water in the direction of Brisbane river.

There was no need for Mortimer to inform me that we were entering another colony, for the heat and the wonderful vegetation that fringed the shores told me plainly enough that I had quitted the land of my birth.

Before long we passed naked black men harpooning sea-cows from strangely-shaped canoes; and whilst I stood watching their prowess one overbalanced himself, owing to the vigour with which he hurled his three-pronged trident, and hardly was he submerged when, with a shriek, he sprang half-way out of the water, seemingly half man and half fish, but the next instant the two parts separated, and the poor wretch was *nothing* below the waist, for the jaws of an enormous shark

had closed upon him there, and snapped him in two. I shuddered with horror as I beheld his two companions drag his still quivering trunk into the boat, which we soon left far astern.

A few minutes later we were steaming up the Brisbane river, each bank being a perfect jungle of tropical vegetation: creeping plants with waxen leaves, and the most gorgeous flowers creeping up the trunks and hanging in festoons from the branches of the tallest forest trees, whilst butterflies of quite as gorgeous tints, and of enormous size, fluttered in all directions; some, I am sure, would, with expanded wings, have covered an ordinary cheese-plate.

Presently, however, the banks became more cleared, showing a white-washed, one-storied, deep-verandahed house here and there, and Mortimer suddenly exclaimed, with twice the excitement that he had shown at the death of the poor native—

“*There* are the pine-apple and tobacco fields that I told you of. Now *don't* they grow like cabbages?”

And when I came to look they certainly did, but the tobacco not a bit in the shape of bundles of cigars, which I had expected, but all green; and I don't believe my partner would have known it was tobacco if some one hadn't told him so first.

Soon after that we reached Brisbane, and landed at the wharf. It looked a new and half-finished place, as it *was* then, and everything in disorder. The first thing that I noticed was a lot of poor people picking over some dust and manure heaps, evidently for bones, and scraps of meat and bread.

“Emigrants! Victims of guide-books and rascally agents! Made 'em believe this was a land of milk and

honey! Each given fifty acres of land to come out. Now find it grows nothing but stones and snakes, so not worth having," said Mortimer.

A few minutes later I caught sight of a band of a dozen black men, naked but for a narrow piece of dirty linen around their loins, and their heads surmounted by such an abundance of woolly hair that, at a little distance, it seemed as though they were enormous black turbans.

These men were in charge of a stern-looking white, armed with a big stick, and they seemed every bit as dejected and miserable as the starving emigrants.

Mortimer had something to say about them also.

"Slaves," grunted he; "only it wouldn't do to call 'em so. Come from Fidgee. Speculator takes a ship over to the islands, asks lots of natives to come aboard, feeds 'em on roast beef and champagne, and tells 'em that if they'll come over the water with him that's how they'll live always, with no work to do. Then he gets 'em to put their marks to documents they don't understand, crams his ship with 'em, brings 'em here, and sends 'em up country, to the cotton and tobacco plantations, where they've to labour without wages for three years, fed on condemned stores from the ships. But of course that ain't slavery; because, don't you see, they've come here willingly, and so those that have brought 'em over can go to church or chapel with a clear conscience. Ah! my lad, there's worse humbug going than spotted wild boys and donkeys changed into zebras. But come along, for my stomach's crying out cupboard!"

So was mine also, for we had eaten very little aboard ship, both of us having proved very bad sailors. We made as quickly as we could, therefore, for the shop

streets, and in the very first we entered we beheld what I took to be a number of gigantic tortoises sprawling all about the pavement in front of a restaurant.

"Turtles, as I'm a sinner!" exclaimed Mortimer in great excitement. "Well, now; I was told all about the emigrants and the Fidgeeans aboard the steamer, but not a word about turtles. I wonder if they make 'em into soup, and if the soup's cheap."

He rushed over to the cook-shop window, and eagerly read something that was pasted up therein, the effect of which was that he came back, seized me by an arm, and dragged me into the restaurant, exclaiming the while—

"Threepence a basin for what in Sydney they charge five shillings, and in London half-a-guinea. Threepence a basin. Three—pence—a—basin. We'll dine on turtle soup—next on sea-cow, which, they say, tastes exactly like veal, and finish up with pine-apples—a meal costing only sixpence a head, and fit for a king."

I must say that it *was* fit for a king, and the pine-apples, at a penny each, were almost as big as cauliflowerers.

We liked our quarters so well that we determined to put up there, and, having thus resolved, started back to the ship to get the donkey and the cart, with our exhibition and all its belongings, ashore, which we had been unable to do before.

Well, we hired a hall, and we billed the capital of Queensland as we had billed so many of the New South Wales townships, only fortunately for us (for it was the last throw of the dice, so far as we were concerned) with much greater success.

For the first time in my entire experience we had a

crowded house. The result was that my partner was in a high state of glee, and that I myself at last viewed as a possibility my one day returning to my parents with the gold watch and chain, diamond ring, and pockets stuffed out with bank-notes, as Mortimer had promised I should do.

I was still somewhat proud of being a showman; because the affair appeared in print, and whatever appeared in print I thought must be very grand. Taking advantage of this weakness on my part, Mortimer often argued that as "a spotted wild boy from the interior I should appear in print also, and in the illustrated papers as well;" but the bait didn't take, for I still was too honest to become a thorough impostor, though I much fear that had my partner wanted me to figure as some young *chief*, all war-paint, war-whoop, and feathers, brandishing a spear or tomahawk, and doing the heroic, instead of appearing as so contemptible a thing as a *spotted* wild boy, the temptation would have been too overpowering, for I was thirteen then, and tall for my age, and had read *The Last of the Mohicans*, and thought such savages very wonderful fellows indeed.

Little did I imagine at the time that before many days were over my head I'd be the *prisoner of savages*, and see a great deal more of them than I'd ever care to see again. Ugh! it makes my flesh creep to this day whenever I think of it.

Though we drew good houses at Brisbane at first going off, chiefly, I expect, because as yet there was neither theatre, music-hall, nor dancing-room in the place, yet in a little while every one who felt an interest in "The Wonderful Adventures of James Moril" had come and witnessed them, and gone away more or less satisfied,

generally, I think, the latter, so that empty chairs and benches grew to be the order of the night once more, and our expenditure to exceed our receipts.

"We must try fresh fields and pastures new, my boy," Mortimer said at last. "We will work our way up the coast to Ipswich and Rockhampton, and then return to Sydney by sea. We've made forty pounds clear profit out of Brisbane, two of which belong to you as my partner, and I'll take care of them for you, lad; I'll take care of 'em."

So the next day we started in our donkey-cart for Ipswich, a town twenty-five miles distant, part of our way lying through a forest, where the pink blossoms of great chestnut-trees perfumed the air, and the Moreton Bay fig-tree drooped with luscious fruit, all intermingled with glossy-leaved bananas, and their golden clusters of pods, whilst rose-coloured cockatoos and many-hued parroquets flitted from bough to bough, and butterflies as large as bats, and of a myriad glittering tints, perched on the great tropical flowers that hung in chains and festoons, making the air heavy with fragrance, from the tree branches.

Just as gorgeôus in their colouring, too, were the snakes that sometimes crossed our path, or raised their heads above the flowers to hiss at us as we passed by, and occasionally we would catch sight of a bright green lizard, almost as large as a baby alligator, basking and glistening in the sun, and seemingly sound asleep.

We had left Brisbane about twelve miles behind, and got into a less thickly-timbered country, when we heard a variety of shouts and cries ahead of us, and on rounding the spur of some rising ground, suddenly caught sight of

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a couple of the Queensland Mounted Police pursuing about half-a-dozen naked aboriginals.

Another minute and they had come up with them, shot down a couple with their revolvers, ridden over and dispersed the rest, and were prancing and curveting alongside of us, asking, laughingly, if we had any liquor or tobacco to spare.

"What did you shoot those two black fellows for?" demanded Mortimer.

"Oh, some of their tribe speared a white shepherd up at the Ten Mile Creek last week, and so we've just obeyed orders and paid 'em out for it," responded one jauntily.

"And why did they spear the white shepherd?" persisted Mortimer.

"Because he peppered some of the black rascals with swan-shot for prowling about his hut looking out for what they could steal," said the other trooper.

"*Did they steal anything?*"

"Not that I know of, mate," was the reply.

"And have you just killed the *same* black fellows who speared him?"

"I'm sure I don't know. *We* think they belong to the same tribe, and that's quite enough for us. The niggers are all so much alike, that there's no telling t'other from which, as the saying is, so for every white man they kill or wound we shoot two of *them*, and then we consider the debt's wiped out. That's Queensland justice, my good friend."¹

The trooper spoke half jestingly and half sneeringly, and his companion immediately added—

¹ As it was regularly meted out up to 1869.

"And as it's dry work arguing the point, now for the beer and 'baccy."

"I'd sooner see you hanged for murder than I'd give you either," retorted Mortimer, who, though a rogue in his own way, was anything but a cruel or hard-hearted one. "I call you cold-blooded butchers; yes, that's what I call *you*."

"As for that, mate, we obey orders, as I said before, and I can show you a Christian magistrate's warrant for what we've just done; a gentleman who goes to church every Sunday, and wouldn't trample on a worm—that's to say if it wasn't a *black* one. Well, *be* mean if you like, and go your way; and here's a bit of unasked-for advice that you'd better lay to heart—give the natives a wide berth yourselves after this, for I don't want the job of avenging such a mean cuss, I'm sure, and they will be sure to spear or waddy you after what's just happened if you give 'em half a chance."

And so saying the two troopers galloped off, leaving us to our reflections, which weren't very agreeable ones, since the country we were traversing was very sparsely settled, and we had not a weapon of any kind with us. For all that, however, we reached Ipswich, a stragglingly built and quite new place, in safety, and performed there for five nights to fair houses.

Then we started on again for Rockhampton, a very much longer journey, and one that would take us several days to perform, accompanied by the disagreeable necessity of, for one or two nights, camping out in the bush, owing to townships and even single houses being so far apart.

We dared not go back, however, as it would have been starving work to have revisited towns and cities

that had already wearied of us ; so we shut our eyes to possible dangers and disagreeables and pressed on.

Three miles north of Ipswich we said good-bye to pineapple and tobacco fields, but soon found that guavas, and wild gooseberries, and raspberries, as well as a species of custard-apple, grew wild in the now really tropical forests, and were delicious eating, though great bloated spiders, with hairy legs, and bodies as large as penny-pieces, centipedes six or eight inches long, large red ants that would snap at your fingers viciously, give them but a chance, and snakes all more or less deadly, had to be braved whilst in search of these dainties.

As for the heat, it was something terrific, necessitating a rest during the middle of the day, when we would take the donkey out of the cart, fether his forelegs with a species of handcuffs called hobbles, so that he could not wander far whilst grazing, and then lighting a fire, we would boil some tea over it in a tin saucepan, yclept a billy, make a damper cake of flour and water, and bake it in the ashes, and after enjoying a good meal (for hunger is a capital sauce), would lie down and go to sleep, and perhaps not start again until nearly evening ; for we preferred travelling on under the brilliant starlight, not only because it was so cool and pleasant, but also by reason that the natives, as a rule, fear to leave their camp-fires of a night, through believing that all kinds of evil spirits are about.

“ And we are now journeying over the very country where James Moril wandered as a wild man for so many years, never thinking that he should see a white face again ; and fifty years ago he'd have had to have travelled a good many hundred miles before he'd have had the slightest chance of beholding one. By Jove ! how the

black natives would stare at an exhibition of our magic-lantern. They'd call us *ghost-makers*, I expect, for they believe in ghosts, I'm told, and they've an odd notion that white men are their own dead come to life again, which is why they never ill-treated us before we began to use them so shamefully," Mortimer said on one occasion.

"In what way have we used them shamefully?" I asked him.

"Why, we've shot all the animals, great and small, that God gave 'em to live on, and in nine cases out of ten only just for wanton sport; but when the poor half-famished creatures appropriate one of the white squatter's many thousands of sheep in turn, he calls *that* thieving, and the shepherds pepper them with small shot for even looking at them with hungry eyes; then, when they retaliate on the shepherd, the mounted police are sent after them, and hunt them down like wild beasts, as we have seen. Now, I am not a bloody or revengful man, but if I was an Australian black fellow, I think I'd try and kill every white man that I came across, the Christian savages!"

"I hope they won't turn your way of thinking until *we* are out of the country, at any rate," I responded with a shudder, though little thinking at the moment how much cause I had for the fervent wish.

CHAPTER IV.

CAPTURED BY NATIVES.—TO BE SLAUGHTERED ON
THE MORROW.

WE slept that night in the primeval forest, and once or twice were awakened by a duet between our donkey and a laughing jackass—a bird with a small body, a large head, and an enormous bill—who will bray exactly like his four-legged brother, commencing and terminating each blare, however, with a hearty and prolonged chuckle, like a wicked old man's laugh.

Our poor *moke*, fancying that he had at last discovered what in all probability he had never even seen since he came out, one of his own species, kept up the concert for a long time, and more than once it was joined in by another strange bird, who kept shouting "*More pork*" as clearly as any human being could pronounce the words.

On all these accounts we did not obtain a very good night's rest, and we had to get up betimes, to accomplish as much of our journey as possible before the great heat of the day set in, ere which time we hoped to traverse twenty miles. We actually did a little more, only passing a single human residence on the way, a "wattle and dab" hut, with a native yelemen or spear sunk deep in the closed door and two more in the window-shutters.

After a good deal of knocking and shouting a pale, scared-looking man showed himself, who told us he had defended his habitation the night before against a

number of furious savages, but after he had killed two or three with an old gun they had drawn off, vowing, however, that they would come back before long.

He seemed to be frightened out of his wits, but would not leave his little homestead for all that; and so we continued our journey, after changing some tobacco and two bottles of beer for a piece of bacon and some damper bread, for our provisions were beginning to fall short, and the information that we shouldn't pass another white settler's abode until we had done another forty miles of our journey made us apprehensive on that score.

"I wish we'd left Rockhampton alone, or else gone to it by water," growled my partner, when we were once more on our way. "You can see now how reprisals work. A white shepherd peppers some black fellows with swan-shot, because he thinks they intend to steal his sheep, and rankling under their hurts they slay the shepherd. In return the police are let loose, and think that all is satisfactorily settled when they have killed two blacks in return for one white. But, very naturally, the natives don't see it in that light. Their blood is up, and little wonder; and now, very likely, they want to double the score also. The poor fellow we've just left is a gone coon, you may depend on it, and he is of the same opinion, or I'm much mistaken; whilst as for ourselves, I shall be uncommon glad when I tread the paving-stones of a civilized street once more."

This way of talking made me feel far from comfortable myself, and I no longer envied Robinson Crusoe his island kingdom *after* his discovery that savages visited it.

My thoughts were still turned in that unpleasant direction, when we both caught sight simultaneously of

three figures approaching us, all glossy black, native savages, carrying a bundle of thin reedy spears in their right hands, and oval shields made apparently of bark on their left arms.

Happily they were a little more frightened of us than we were of them, fancying, perhaps, that we had guns in the cart, so in a minute they had vanished out of sight; but we were not much comforted by their flight, for the fear came upon us that they would ere long follow us in company with a great many more, and spear us at our next halting-place whilst concealed themselves behind the bushes.

On this account we were not at all sorry to exchange the forest for an open plain of coarse grass, which the heat of the sun had changed into hay even whilst it grew. Thirty miles across it we could see a range of hills with their sides well wooded, and in one part of the level expanse what in the distance looked like a flock of kangaroos. It was a wild and desolate scene, but whilst traversing it we could not be killed by foes hidden in ambuscade, and even that thought was a comfort now.

A day's journey on the other side of those mountains we hoped to find civilization again, and at the end of a couple of days our destination.

Meanwhile we had to toil on, with nothing to shelter us from the tropical sun, and I am sure that had we had a thermometer with us, it would have marked more than a hundred degrees.

When we literally could not push any further we camped, and got under the cart for shelter, where, though we had no appetite to eat, we found a little beer very welcome, as also did the poor donkey, who

came and lapped it out of the hollow of our hands again and again.

We could not start again until sunset, it was no use. Besides, we wanted the natives' horror of night to have begun to exercise full sway upon them before we entered the wooded districts once more; then we could travel all through the night, we thought, without any very great risk of encountering them. So when the sun began to sink like a red-hot globe into a sea of blood, we re-harnessed Lion, and once more turned our faces northwards.

Ten minutes later, with a suddenness peculiar to tropical regions, the stars were looking down upon us from out an indigo-hued heaven, and conspicuous among the rest the glorious constellation of the Southern Cross, whilst at the same time a cool, southerly wind, called a *buster*, began to blow, causing us to feel positively chilly.

We had crossed the plain, and were just on the point of entering the forest again, when Mortimer uttered an ejaculation of surprise, and pointed towards three tree branches planted upright in the earth, and supporting, at a height of twelve feet above the ground, a sort of hammock made of slabs of bark, above the top edge of which something small and round was dimly observable, with fluttering in the breeze therefrom what strongly resembled human hair.

Mortimer and I looked at each other, and his countenance exhibited, as I thought, apprehension, horror, triumph, and glee mingled most strangely together.

"We have found by chance just what I wanted," he said the next moment. "A Queensland mummy—a

sun-dried native. Worth fifty pounds in Melbourne, but which we will make hundreds out of by exhibiting it ourselves. Hurrah !”

He drove the donkey right alongside the weird erection, and stood upright in the cart, in order to obtain a better view of it.

Involuntarily, and with a mixed feeling of curiosity and repugnance, I followed his example, and this was what I beheld :—

A naked corpse, dried by the heat of the burning Queensland sun till it resembled leather. Masses of long black hair adhered to the skull, and floated in the wind, as also did *its* beard and whiskers, which had grown to a great length. A solitary eye, seemingly hard as stone, glared with a dull, phosphorescent glow from out its socket ; the chin had dropped, and the black, withered tongue was thrust out between rows of teeth that were as white as ivory. The mummy was evidently that of a full-grown man, about five feet six inches in height, and of slender build, as are all Queensland natives without exception.

“ Come, bear a hand, Aubrey, and we will lower him into the cart,” said Mortimer.

Bear a hand indeed ! I don’t think I could have touched the thing for double its weight in gold. All I could do was to stand trembling, and with teeth chattering.

Perceiving my utter inability to assist him, Mortimer, with a growl, attempted to perform the feat unaided, and found the mummy so light, that, having put forth all his strength when not a quarter of it was needed, he overbalanced himself, and with his ghastly burthen fell into the bottom of the cart.

It was well for him that he did so, for a second later a long reed-like spear struck and sank into the bark hammock just where my partner's head and shoulders had been as he hauled out its grim tenant, whilst a second missile grazed my own shoulder, and drew from me a cry of mingled pain and terror.

A whoop or war-cry, half shriek, half yell, startled the silence of the forest. Whizz! whizz! whizz! came the spears. The night seemed to be full of dusky faces and brandished arms; and then something or other descended with a crack upon my head, and I felt as though sinking into the earth.

When I regained my senses, of which I had been deprived by a blow from a club or waddy, I found myself lying on the grass in a little dell having a water-hole in its centre, surrounded by trees of enormous girth and height, under one of which I noticed our donkey and cart, whilst my unfortunate partner lay bound with green withies under another, with his head all bloody.

This was revealed to me by a circle of blazing fires, and close in the rear of one a lot of women and old men were squatted cross-legged on the grass, making a horrible noise with the jaw-bones of some animals, which they clashed together with all their might, whilst, with the shrillest of voices, they kept up a really ear-splitting accompaniment.

Whilst I wondered whether it was our funeral dirge which they were chanting as a kind of preliminary ceremony to the cutting of our throats, either the rustling of countless leaves or the pattering of naked feet attracted my attention, coming from another direction, and a minute later, rushing through the interstices between the watch-fires, and in many instances leaping

over the flames, came evidently, the warriors of the tribe, yelling, gesticulating, and brandishing spears, boomerangs, waddies, and nulla-nullas, the foam flying in every direction from their parted lips, and their long matted elf-locks fluttering with every motion, like intertangled and writhing serpents.

They were quite naked; but several had their bodies and limbs painted in broad stripes of red and blue with some kind of coarse pigment, and others had stuck in their hair bright-coloured parrot and cockatoo feathers.

They were evidently in a state of intense excitement, and it all seemed like a hideous nightmare to me, who had always been accustomed to look down upon our aboriginal population, owing to the sorry specimens of the race I had seen in New South Wales, dressed in the cast-off habiliments of civilization, journeying in twos or threes about the country begging, and looking like the meanest of Jim Crows.

These savages, on the contrary, resembled those that I had read of in the works of Cooper, Aimard, and Mayne Reid, being evidently quite as fierce, whilst infinitely more hideous of aspect.

But what dancers they were—how lightning swift in their movements; how wonderfully agile in their leaps and bounds! Sometimes their antics would resemble such as a troop of drunken gorillas might have indulged in; but in the twinkling of an eye the grotesque and absurd would change to the horrible, the blood-curdling, the Satanic, and they would leap and plunge, twirl and spin, brandishing their weapons and clashing them together by turns, whilst their eyes rolled and glared, their great nostrils quivered, and the froth churned up by their strong teeth flew from their mouths in showers.

I regarded them now with the most abject terror, for I had by this time made up my mind that they were working themselves up to the requisite pitch of fury for torturing and slaughtering my partner and myself; and to judge from the woe-begone expression of his face, such was also his opinion of affairs.

We could hold no communication together, for I did not dare venture to creep towards him, even though I was unbound, but his countenance was quite sufficient index to his thoughts, and so I could read them like a printed book. It was very far from comforting reading though.

The war-dance, or *corrobboree*, was not succeeded by our slaughter, however, for on its ceasing the warriors commenced to hold a great palaver or *yabber-yabber*, at the end of which they took the mummy out of the cart, and whilst two of them held it in an upright position immediately in front of Mortimer, others proceeded to address him in loud and excited tones, and, as far as I could make out, seemed to be urging him to do something or other with it.

Poor Mortimer evidently strove very hard to understand them, but without succeeding in the least, and his dumb pantomime was, I could plainly see, equally unintelligible to them.

They seemed to get very angry at this, and immediately brought the mummy over and set it up in front of me, going through the same programme of speech and gesticulation; but, as may be imagined, I could no more make out what they meant than could Mortimer, whereat they looked very vexed, though not nearly so angry as they had seemed to be with him; and straightway taking the hideous thing close over against him

again, they drove two stakes into the earth, and attached it to them by the arms in an upright position, so that the stony glare of its solitary eye was fixed on my wretched partner, whom they next threatened by pointing at his body, then at the weapons they carried, thirdly at me, fourthly at the mummy, and lastly at the sky; after which they raised a great shouting and yelling, and after brandishing their weapons anew, they separated, and went to lie down round the fires, where they soon seemed to fall asleep; indeed their snores became convincing proof that such was the case.

I now began to wonder what it could all mean, and at last came to the conclusion that Mortimer and myself were to be slain on the morrow if we didn't do something by or to the mummy during the night.

"Perhaps," I reflected, "they take us to be medicine men, and think we can restore the dead man to life, or" (and here I recollected the universal aboriginal belief that the white settlers are their own dead in a second state of existence) "that we have the power to make him like ourselves, and in default of our working this miracle they will, for our supposed stubbornness, make us like unto him, barring the change of colour—a wonderfully easy task."

Prior to lying down they had unharnessed the donkey and driven it off into the bush, and some of them had also made Mortimer's bonds more secure; but to me they had paid little or no regard, perhaps thinking I had lost so much blood from the waddy stroke over the head that I should be too faint and weak to move.

It is true my hair was all clotted with blood, and I dare say I looked as white as a sheet; but happily I had still a little strength left in me, and a small portion

of my wits as well, for, had it been otherwise, I don't think we should ever have got out of the awful scrape in which we were involved.

How we *did* get out of it must form the subject of another chapter.

CHAPTER V.

I TURN OUT TO BE A GHOST-MAKER ON A LARGE SCALE.

I HAD for a long time nothing to do but to lie still and think. Had it been otherwise, the scheme might never have occurred to me to which we owed our deliverance, and which, to be brief, was to induce our captors to believe that we were men-makers or ghost-makers, or, at the very least, potent and powerful magicians, through the medium of our magic-lantern.

It was just the very apparatus to impose upon their simple credulity with, and the enormous breadths of snow-white trunks that many of the surrounding gum-trees afforded, would show off the pictures as well as any sheet or expanse of stretched canvas, aye, even better, for as the slide was passed slowly on, the figures would seem to pass round to the back of the tree, and in that manner become lost to view. To render the plot successful, however, I should have to wait until the various fires had burnt out and it was quite dark, and my chief doubt was, could I then find and arrange everything that was required for my purpose?

How I longed to approach Mortimer, in order to tell

him my plans! but I dared not risk it, for some of the savages might be sleeping weasel-fashion, with one eye open, and in such a case I should be detected, and if I escaped being speared or waddied outright, ten chances to one I should be bound for greater security, and then my great scheme would perforce be at an end.

On the other hand the cart stood much nearer to me, and I could approach it without passing in such close proximity to the savages as in crossing over to Mortimer, on all which accounts I determined to keep my own counsel, and depend entirely on myself in what I was about to undertake.

How slowly the time seemed to pass and the fires to smoulder down! The birds of the night, and chief amongst them our old friends the laughing jackass and the "more pork," were noisy enough, whilst the locusts buzzed in the tree branches overhead like the distant ceaseless whirr of machinery. Occasionally, too, the howl of the warrigal, or Australian wild dog, would sound shrill and indescribably doleful in the distance; whilst near by the sleeping natives snored through their great wide, flat noses, and sometimes one of them in his dreams would throw up and brandish a naked ebony arm, and give half-utterance to a war-whoop, which I was always fearful would wake the rest.

It did not, however, for they were sound sleepers, even though not one of their number was there who did not grasp some kind of weapon in one or other of his hands, so as to have it ready at the very instant of his waking, and as in nearly every instance they were of a missile character, this fact did not add to my composure.

Still, as it was a case of "nothing venture nothing win," and our very lives seemed to depend on the success of my scheme, I was nothing daunted.

At last the moment arrived when it struck me that it would be comparatively safe to put it into execution. The fires had sunk down to a dull, smouldering glow, and everything was plunged into the most gloomy obscurity, for so thick was the tree foliage overhead that only a single star or two out of the glittering hosts that stud an Australian heaven could show us its diminutive light.

With a brief but fervent prayer, therefore, that success might crown my efforts, I crept cautiously upon all fours towards the cart, and just as noiselessly clambered into and crouched down at the bottom of it, preparatory to setting to work. My task was more difficult than I had imagined it would be, for the lamp wanted oil and the wick required trimming, all of which I had to do in the dark.

Then I had also to fix up something for the lantern to stand steadily on, in effecting which I upset the oil-can and knocked over a plate, and for a moment my hair stood almost on end with terror, lest I had prematurely wakened up our savage captors.

How relieved I felt upon discovering that such was not the case!

But now I had to select the best slides out of the boxful, for I did not want to commence with the shipwreck scene, which, as doubtless not one of the savages had ever seen the sea, would not have been understood. No, I wanted two especially out of our at least three score, one of them representing James Moril being welcomed and kindly treated by the Queensland blacks,

and the other depicting him leading them on to victory against a hostile tribe.

I hoped that our captors would take this as a supernatural hint that they had better use us well likewise, and I thought it extremely probable that they would so accept it. But then to get at these special slides I had to strike a light, a risk that caused my blood to run cold again, and—where on earth was the match-box?

I groped about in search of the box for at least five minutes ere I found it; when, as the matches were happily silent striking, I kindled one and lighted the lantern lamp, taking care that the polished reflector thereof was not turned *towards* our sleeping foes.

Placing the lamp in the very bottom of the cart, and covering it as much as possible with my body, I selected my two favourite slides, and half-a-dozen more to back them up if required, and then I quickly clapped the lamp into its proper place inside the lantern, closed the door, pushed slide No. 1 into proper position, took aim at the trunk of the biggest gum-tree, guessed as nearly as possible the proper focus, and then knew that I had only to remove the brass protector at the end of the lens in order to make my *ghosts walk*.

The only question now to be solved was, would they walk to any purpose?—and I own that I felt far from comfortable, as it suddenly occurred to me that wizards weren't always rewarded, and that even in civilized and Christian countries they had sometimes been burnt instead.

It was not a time for irresolution, however, and my movements were hastened and heralded at this juncture by one of the most terrific brays that our donkey Lion had ever been known to indulge in.

I doubt if even a man-eating tiger could have emitted a more awful medley of sounds, which had the effect of waking up the black fellows in evidently the wildest conceivable state of alarm, for though their poor foolish bush bird could bray in its way, it was only as the squeak of a child's wooden penny trumpet as compared with the roar of the great fog-horn at Labrador when in full blast.

The black fellows sprang to their feet, wide awake and terror-stricken. They had evidently never heard a sound at all resembling it before. They ran against each other, and they threw their arms about, and made the most uncouth and guttural noises deep down in their throats; whilst from somewhere in the rear came the shriek of women and squalling of children, in answer to which sounds Lion very naturally brayed again, and with still stronger emphasis.

At the same instant I removed the brass covering of the magic-lantern lens, and a dozen seeming additional savages, with the wild white man standing in their midst, appeared as though standing close against the milk-white trunk of an enormous gum-tree, whilst, at the same time, the lantern directed what looked like an enormous fiery eye full upon them out of the darkness of the bush.

They didn't see the fiery eye at first, for the gaze of one and all was fixed upon the seeming accession of their number. They shouted to the strangers, but received no answer. They then "yabber-yabbered" amongst themselves, and one at last threw a spear at the tree, and though it seemed to transfix one of the forms there was no cry, nor even the slightest movement, as a result.

The live savages now recoiled from their shadowy brethren, and clustered close together, as though for mutual support, whereupon I moved the slide on so that the figures seemed to pass round the tree to the rear, and immediately substituted the battle-scene; and as the trunk would not take it all in, I paused when I came to the two central figures, representing James Moril overcoming and throttling, with his bare hands, a gigantic aboriginal chief.

Two or three yelemens were now immediately cast at Moril, but though they all seemed to stick in him, one even apparently entering his very brain, he went on with the throttling business just as coolly as though nothing had happened to him.

This was altogether too much for our black friends. Seized with a wild panic they broke and fled, some shrieking with terror as on wheeling round they caught sight in turn of the magic-lantern's apparently fiery eye. Like madmen they scampered off into the darkness of the bush, their womenkind and children seeming to immediately follow their example.

Directly their retreating footsteps and their yellings ceased to be audible in the distance, I fished a knife out of the cart, and making straight for my partner, cut his bonds and set him free.

"You managed that capitally, Aubrey," said he; "and now you shall take a handful of oats, and go into the bush and catch the donkey, whilst I get the mummy into the cart, and stretch my limbs, which are pretty considerably cramped."

I thought that he might have been a trifle warmer in his praises, and in his thanks as well; but it was just like him, as also was his sending me into the

bush after the donkey, for Mortimer would never poke even his little finger into the slightest jeopardy so long as anybody else's whole body could be used for the purpose.

However, after saying to him, "I'd keep the ghosts walking, if I was you, for fear some of them should return," I started off, and soon caught Lion, unhoppled though he was; and after I had brought him back, and harnessed him to the cart,—Mortimer sitting down smoking the while, and continually complaining how stiff his limbs were,—my companion condescended to clamber up therein, and to superintend the lantern, whilst I drove, picking out the way as best I could.

There's not many a colonial boy who can't steer by the stars, and knowing that our proper route lay in a nor'-nor'-easterly direction, I kept as close to it as the nature of the ground would allow, which was often of such a character that I had to dismount and walk by Lion's head for long miles at a stretch.

Mortimer, meanwhile, sat or reclined beside the mummy, and in charge of the magic-lantern, with the brass cap over the lens (for we did not care to show a light), yet with everything ready for raising ghosts at a moment's notice, should they be required for our safety's sake to frighten away pursuing black fellows.

It was by no means an agreeable journey, for we might have been speared, or waddied, or boomeranged at any instant, and the way lay for at least three miles through a mountain gorge, with a sheer precipice rising on one side of us, and an abyss of unknown depth lying on the other, whilst the rocky roadway could not have been more than nine feet wide.

This gloomy pass traversed, however, we reached the

open bush, in which I could venture to ride again, and a few hours later the rising sun showed us something actually in the shape of a road, and about a mile ahead a settler's hut, standing in the midst of a little tobacco plantation, and—could I believe my eyes?—a patch of monster pine-apples and melons adjoining it as well.

We were hospitably received and well treated. I ate melons and pine-apples to my heart's content, and, what was a far greater treat, had half-a-dozen hours' delicious sleep on a straw mattress, and a cup of coffee and a plate of hot damper cake on waking up.

We stayed in our comfortable quarters until the great heat of the day was past, and then we resumed our journey, but happily reached Rockhampton without any further adventures.

CHAPTER VI.

I RETURN, LIKE THE REPENTANT PRODIGAL, TO MY FATHER'S HOUSE.

ROCKHAMPTON was but a repetition of Brisbane and Ipswich, so far as both our public and private life was concerned. The mummy was certainly a draw, but not so great a one as my partner had anticipated; yet, being of a very sanguine temperament, he would often observe, "Wait until we get to Sydney and Melbourne, and *then* see how it will rake the money into our pockets."

But I listened to him with little interest, for I had

by this time firmly made up my mind that immediately on reaching the former capital I would at once go home, and even at the cost of a whacking return to a life of steadiness and respectability, for I had by now got to believe in the truth of the proverb, that rolling stones gather no moss..

I was never a very good hand at concealing my intentions, and Mortimer must have found out this one of mine, and determined to defeat it, for he all at once made up his mind to go on to Melbourne without touching at Sydney, and selected a steamboat for our passage (the *Rangatira*), which made the voyage direct. I was thus carried close past my home, and five hundred and seventy-seven miles past it, and at Melbourne my master (for he was, in fact, my master, though he always stuck out that we were partners) hired a hall in Great Bourke Street,¹ and declared he would exhibit there for six months.

I must not forget to tell you that at Rockhampton Mortimer persuaded a runaway "Fidgee" slave, a lad of about seventeen, to join our party; and directly he had secured the Melbourne hall, he lodged him in a little den on the premises, and dyed his abundance of black hair red, put enormous gilt rings in his ears, and painted little dull red spots all over his body, like you see in a skate-fish. In this manner he at last possessed "a wild boy from the far interior," and in conjunction with the mummy and the panorama hoped to drive a good trade, and so we did up to the time when I left him, which happened as follows:—

Seeing that he could get on without me, and that in

¹ Doubtless many people will recollect its being exhibited there perfectly well.

point of fact I was only a very hard-working servant without wages, I told him that I had resolved to go home, and asked him for my money-box and its contents, which had been nearly five pounds; but he told me with a laugh, that that had all been spent long ago, and that if I attempted to leave him "in such a shabby manner," he'd have me pursued, and brought back as a *runaway apprentice*. How I wonder now that I could have been afraid of such a threat!

I was so afraid of it at the time, however, that I ran away from my partner—yes, sneaked off in the middle of the night, and with only eighteenpence in my pocket, and then actually walked overland, the entire five hundred and seventy-seven miles, to Sydney, begging my meals as I went, and camping out in the bush of a night.

It took me exactly a month to get from capital to capital, and, as may be imagined, my feet were on the ground by the time that I accomplished it.

How didn't I lose my way, the reader may wonder? Well, the telegraph ran the entire distance, so the white posts were an all-sufficient guide; and instead of a whacking on reaching home, I received a most kindly welcome, and in lieu of the fatted calf we had my favourite dainty—an enormous pumpkin-pie for dinner.

PERILS AMONGST PAPUANS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCES TOM TREVOR AND HIS SAILING-BOAT THE 'BUNYIP.'

I WAS a year older than Tom Trevor, and yet, somehow or other, Tom Trevor always managed to have his own way in everything, and to allow me mine in nothing. The fact was, he was a handsome boy, and I was an ugly one; he had the gift of the gab, whilst I was naturally almost as mum as an oyster. He was the son of an English officer, who had fought through I don't know how many wars, and Tom always talked of his adventures with so many comments as to what he *himself* should have done under like circumstances, that they somehow sounded as though they were Tom's adventures, and left the impression, on *my* mind at all events, that though Tom's father had been a hero of the very first water, yet that, given the same advantages, Tom would have been a greater one.

You see, I knew nothing about wars, and very little about the world either. My father had had to do with thousands of sheep instead of with thousands of soldiers,

he having for a score of years been a squatter on the Maranoo Plains, and until we had come down to live in the neighbourhood of Brisbane, so that he might be near medical advice on account of failing health, I had never seen so many as a hundred people together, nor, though seventeen years of age, had I ever beheld a railway train or the sea; so now, perhaps, you won't wonder at my admiration for handsome Tom Trevor, who seemed to me to have seen pretty nearly everything.

He had lived all his life in great cities like Melbourne and Sydney, could talk about the opera and theatres, play billiards, manage a boat like an old sailor (at all events so he declared, and I thought), dressed in strict accordance with the fashion plates, and composed poetry for young ladies' albums. As for his riding, it was like a picture, with his long stirrup-leathers, his heels so well dropped, and his toes turned in, with only just the tips of them in the irons. He called it the military seat, and of course I admired it exceedingly, and did my best to imitate it, often wondering, however, how long it would enable a fellow to stick on to the back of a born "buck-jumper," or whilst sweeping down a rocky gully at full speed after a mob of wild cattle.

Tom Trevor could also fence with foils, and box in a most masterly fashion, with the gloves on. It was rather odd, considering this last fact, that when one day a larrikin knocked a bran-new pot-hat, for which he'd just paid a guinea, down over his nose and eyes in Toowoomba Street, Tom should only have muttered "cad," and in an almost inaudible tone too, as he walked away; yes, and the rough standing still and grinning in his face the while. I must say that I felt very much like going in for him myself, on my friend's

account, but Tom declared it would be "too awfully vulgar," that he "wouldn't soil his hands with such dirt," &c., and soon managed to make me believe that he'd done quite the right thing in replying to the larrikin's assault with nothing more disagreeable to the larrikin than silent contempt.

Tom's father and mine lived in adjoining villas, having their grounds sloping down to the beautiful waters of Moreton Bay, alike famous for the size of its sharks and of its turtles. Both houses were large, with deep verandahs around three sides, wherein we Queenslanders almost live in summer-time.

At the back of our villa, which was called "Illawarra," a grove of pines bore apples as large as rock-melons, and a banana plantation adjoined it, whilst the lawns in front were like velvet, the flowers magnificent, and some of the butterflies that alighted upon them would have covered a small cheese-plate, with their wings expanded, whilst the gorgeous colouring of those wings put that of even the hothouse-like flowers to shame, though they were almost matched by the plumage of the rose cockatoos, the rosella parroquets, and the myriads of little green lovebirds, which you may sometimes see in cages in England, and which are our sparrows.

Between the grounds of the two villas, and forming their boundary line, a creek ran up from the bay, and at the head of it was Tom's boat-house, in which he kept his half-decked little craft called the *Bunyip*,¹ in which we used to sail about for hours at a time, sometimes landing to explore one of the many uninhabited but beautiful islands which stud the bay, or running

¹ A bunyip is a demon, which the black fellows believe lives at the bottom of deep water-holes.

across towards one of the more lonely shores of the opposite mainland, to watch the black fellows harpooning sea-cows from their canoes. And now, having introduced Tom's boat as well as Tom, I will begin to tell you of the last voyage that I ever took in her, and which was the commencement of the most strange of all our adventures.

CHAPTER II.

TRIED AND FOUND WANTING.—A TERRIBLE BOATING ADVENTURE.

TOM TREVOR was whimsical, impulsive, and eccentric; you never knew what he would be up to next; indeed, for that matter, he didn't know himself. He liked to do things that other people didn't do, and when this was impossible, then he would attempt the doing of similar things, but in a different way, or at a different time.

Knowing this peculiarity of his, I was not a bit surprised, one burning hot Christmastide, to be woke up in the middle of the night by some one throwing bananas against my window, and, on getting up and looking out, to behold Tom standing on the lawn below, clad in extremely nautical fashion, with a telescope under his arm, and a cigar in his mouth, of as nearly as possible the same size.

"Come down, Ben Smith, with your drowsy head, and let us have a sail on the bay this lovely moonlight night in search of mermaids," he said, as soon as I had opened my window.

Well, I grumbled about its being one o'clock in the morning, and raised sundry objections against what I remember I called "a freak only fit for two lunatics," and then I proved my right to the title by letting him talk me over, just as I always did; and the result was that in five minutes more I was by his side, and in ten we were on board the *Bunyip*, and pushing her with a long pole out of the narrow creek into the open water. Then we got up her mast, hoisted jib and mainsail, kept full, and stood right out towards the centre of the bay.

It was a superb night, and I was not sorry now I had come. The moon was at her full, and gave light enough to have read the smallest print by. As for the air it was soft and balmy, and laden with the perfume of flowers from the shore, from whence too came the song of various night birds, broken in upon now and then by the malicious-sounding chuckle of the laughing jackass. Even the very fish were wide-awake, and springing out of the water on all sides of us, whilst the course that we had come was traced out astern by the phosphorescent sparkle of the waves, which is a beautiful peculiarity of tropical seas.

Tom Trevor had always posed as a great admirer of the beauties of nature, but I soon began to wish that he could have contented himself with nature's charms, without supplementing them by those of his big cigars, and a large case-bottle of brandy-and-water, which I soon found he had stowed away in the boat's locker; for if the one made him sick, or the other intoxicated him—and I could tell by the colour that the mixture was a pretty stiff one—how the dickens, I reflected, with my as yet very limited experience, should I be able to manage the boat alone?

As for lecturing or even advising Tom Trevor, my model and mentor in one, I didn't dare attempt it, and the only way that I saw of preventing what I almost feared, was to help him with cigars and bottle, and so lessen both risks by dividing them.

It was perhaps fortunate that I did so, for the brandy, to which I was wholly unaccustomed, stimulated my courage and dissipated my apprehensions, even blunting my usually keen observation to such an extent that I never noticed how suddenly the sky was getting clouded, that a hollow wind, coming in puffs, and making "cats'-paws" on the water, had taken the place of the gentle zephyrs which had wafted us away from the shore half-an-hour previously; or that a monstrous shark, with his black dorsal fin cleaving the water like a wedge, was stealthily following in our wake, as though he something more than suspected that he would be indebted to our folly for a toothsome breakfast.

All this while Tom Trevor was lolling back in the boat steering in his usual languid fashion, and between whiffs at his cigar singing snatches of music-hall songs, giving me orders to do this, that, or the other thing, or chaffing me as to my looking "green about the gills," or by asking if "I didn't feel inclined to shoot porpoises?"

"When do you mean to put about? Remember, please, that we shall have to tack a lot of times before we shall be able to make the creek, with the wind almost dead ahead of us," I at last ventured to remark.

"Oh, hang putting about," rejoined Tom with a reckless laugh; "I mean to cruise to and fro until daylight. Must, in fact," he added, "for my watch

and chain—the one that has got the compass charm on it—are at home on my toilet-table, and I don't think that I could navigate my way back without it."

I was now alarmed in all conscience, for I knew that dawn only came with four in the morning, and that it could hardly yet be two o'clock. The moon was already blotted out of the sky by clouds, a contingency that Tom had certainly never calculated on, and for some minutes the boat had been cleaving the black waters at a terrible speed, or at least so it appeared to me, full before the wind too, with not a single jib or mainsail; now and then running her bows completely under the hissing white foam, and canting it back over us in a shower of spray.

It was at this juncture that a long, black canoe, manned by natives, who were working at their paddles as though for dear life, shot right across our bows, almost instantly to disappear again in the gathering gloom; but whilst we were within view of each other, her crew had screamed shrilly at us, in what had sounded like tones of terror and warning, and so much was Tom Trevor impressed by their gesticulations and their shouts, though neither of us had been able to make out a word of what they said, that he muttered, "Good God! what will become of us?" in a way that I had never heard him speak before; and, as I stared at him, as much alarmed by this phenomenon as by any that had preceded it, the luminosity of the water all round showed me his face as ghastly white as was the ocean's phosphorescent waves, whilst not a dozen yards astern of us, stirring up what looked to be a track of liquid fire with its rapid motion through the water, came the grim "hyena of the ocean," who had been

following us for so long a while; his nose thrust half out of the waves, apparently in order that he might snort and spout by turns, so as to give free vent to his excitement, for a shark does occasionally spout, though at a very slight elevation from the horizontal.

Observing, I presume, the fixed gaze of horror on my face, Tom Trevor looked round and perceived the shark in turn. But no sooner had he caught sight of the monster (I believe that it was twelve feet in length, if not more) than his presence of mind seemed to utterly forsake him, and I suppose he must have thought it possible for the leviathan to have seized upon him over the stern of the boat, for letting go the tiller he cast himself forward along the bottom of the craft, at the same time giving vent to the wildest exclamations of despair.

I had no time to think of *him*, however; nor at first of the shark either, for the instant that the tiller was let go the boat broached to, with the result that the mainsail, which, as I have said before, hadn't so much as a reef in it, was rent into fluttering rags and streamers, and with the upper part of the mast went in another half-minute over the side, leaving us a complete wreck.

Had mast and sail held out we must have been capsized, however, by the force of the wind, for we had very little ballast aboard; so that of the two evils certainly the lesser one had befallen us, and I tried to thank God for it, and moreover did so in my heart, though no words would come.

Then, suddenly remembering that Heaven helps those the most who try to help themselves, I blundered away astern over Tom Trevor's writhing body, for he was

floundering like a porpoise in the water that we had shipped, whilst positively raving in his terror, and seizing hold of the tiller I managed to get the *Bunyip* before the wind again, when her "spitfire jib" ceased to flap, but bellied out instead, and drove us along, through rather than over the waves, at a great speed, though I hadn't the least conception in what direction.

But I knew, and the knowledge was positively blood-curdling, that if she didn't soon run right on some rocky islet, against which she would splinter into matchwood, and leave us to be pounded to a jelly between surf and boulders, then that we must be bearing straight to sea, there either to founder beneath the huge rollers of the misnamed Pacific, or, if the present storm changed to a calm before it engulfed us, then, most likely, to die of hunger and thirst in those comparatively shipless waters.

As it happened, I need not have tortured myself with the contemplation of only probable perils, because there was a certain and a terrible one bearing straight down upon us, which I had never even taken into my calculations.

It wasn't the shark, for I'd seen nothing of *him* since our mast had gone overboard, and I think it very likely that the cannon-like report of the splitting sail frightened him away.

No, it was a far vaster leviathan than he, and the instant that it loomed up, black and huge, out of the darkness, accompanied by a terrible roar that somewhat resembled the human voice, and a flying vision as of an armed warrior rushing through the air, the inky mass was on and over us, and the crashing of the *Bunyip's* frail timbers was all confounded and mixed

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up, in my mind, with the bubbling of water in at my mouth, nostrils, and ears, and the gliding of something green, slimy, and apparently endless in length, over my face.

Indeed, before the end came I seemed to be sinking away from the leviathan into space, with a sound as of soothing music in my ears, and the most striking scenes of my past life appearing and disappearing before me like dissolving views.

CHAPTER III.

ON BOARD THE MYSTERIOUS SCHOONER.—TOM TREVOR
THINKS HER A PIRATE.

WHEN I recovered consciousness I found myself lying on the deck of a small schooner. It was broad daylight, the sun was shining warm and bright, and no land was to be seen.

A little later I knew that this vessel had been my fancied leviathan, that the "terrible roar" had been a shout to me through a speaking-trumpet to "port my helm," so as to escape being run down, for the *Bunyip* had not been observed until the schooner was almost on her; that "the armed warrior rushing through the air" had been her figure-head (she was called the *Centurion*), and that the green, shining, endless-seeming thing that had appeared to be gliding over my face was the copper sheathing that covered her bottom,

which, after it had ridden down our boat, must have passed completely over me.

It was a lucky thing that we had been seen at all, and that we had not sunk before we were picked up, which, in my case, was owing to my having caught hold of and fixed a tenacious though unconscious grip upon the tiller which had got unshipped and then parted company with the *Bunyip* altogether. As for Tom Trevor, he had gone down and come up again with a portion of the wreck, and a lot of cordage had been twisted around him and it by the action of the water, so that he was held tight on to the floating wreck-wood, from which our rescuers found it no easy matter to cut him adrift.

Directly I had learnt all this I was eager that we should be put ashore as quickly as possible, knowing how anxious our parents would be about us; but when I mentioned the wish to the captain, who was a very pleasant and amiable-looking man, clean-shaven, and dressed more like a minister of some Christian sect than a sailor, he told me blandly that the thing was quite impossible, that our home lay by now a good fifty miles over his larboard quarter, that no captain in the world would put back under such circumstances, and that therefore we must make the voyage with him, and pay for our "board and lodging" by being as useful as we could.

This was terrible news, though had I but been able to make my father and mother acquainted with the fact that I was alive and well, I don't think that I should have minded it much. As it was, I felt sure that portions of the wrecked *Bunyip* would be found in the bay, be identified by Tom's people, and that

thereupon we should be set down as drowned, and mourned for as though we were really dead.

So gloomy did these reflections make me, that when I went forward to see Tom in his bunk in the forecabin, for he was in much worse case than myself as far as weakness and exhaustion went, I did so with all the comforting things that it was possible to say under such circumstances well arranged in my mind, and my face tortured into an expression of contentment which in point of fact I was a very long way off from feeling.

I might have spared myself the trouble, and in a few minutes I wished heartily that I had, for the petty discomforts of the situation distressed dainty Tom Trevor a great deal more than did anything else.

Even his gratitude at being preserved from a watery grave seemed to have been dissipated by the fact that they had just given him some "execrable soup in a tin pannikin," and had exchanged his sea-drenched clothing for the "slops of a common sailor-boy."

'Twas evident that even these two trifles were very much more serious matters to him than any distress that his parents might be in; and so disgusted was I by the discovery that, instead of "tempering the wind to the shorn lamb," I let the black sheep (whom I had regarded for so long as being the very purest "merino") have my intelligence as hot and strong as ever I could give it; that is to say, I represented our position to be as bad as I could, and then poured on him as many dismal apprehensions as I could possibly think of, instead of the sanguine hopes which I had been so industriously hatching for his special behoof.

The result was that my erst hero began to blubber like a great baby, exclaiming between his sobs—"Oh,

it will kill me. I know it'll kill me. We are on board one of the dirtiest of coasters, and a single week of it would be the death of me."

"I advise you to grin and bear it, old fellow, as I intend to do," were the only words of comfort that I had the patience to fling at him; and then I left him to digest them, and for the next four-and-twenty hours troubled him very little with my company; by which time, however, he was able to seek *me* out, and to stick to me like a leech as well.

He seemed, indeed, to now regard me as I had for so long a while regarded him, and this presented itself at times to me in so absurd a light that I couldn't help chuckling over it. My anger with him was past, however, and we were friends and chums as formerly. I fancy that we both felt the urgent necessity of hanging together, for the more we saw of the captain, his two mates, and his crew, the more we grew to dislike and doubt them. Not that any one was as yet positively unkind to us, but there was an air of mystery about the craft and about all who belonged to her, and I'm also sure that I came suddenly upon the captain and first mate one day when they were discussing the expedience of throwing Tom and myself overboard; yes, actually after they had taken the trouble to save us.

I distinctly heard the captain say, "It would have been all right enough had they been nobodies, but I've wormed out of them that their parents are quite leading people. Yes, hang it all, the father of one of them is a justice of the peace, and when they get home they'll blab." To which the mate curtly responded, "Why *should* they get home?"

I did not stay to hear more, for it would have been too dangerous, there being no hiding-place close by. I didn't turn back either, or quicken my pace, for either action might have aroused their suspicions; but I lounged past them, humming a song as I went, at the same time rubbing away at the lamp which I had just taken out of the binnacle to clean, such having been one of my regular duties.

I had several times thought it strange that Captain Massingham, upon discovering that our parents were wealthy (of which fact Tom Trevor informed him at the earliest possible opportunity), didn't treat us as passengers, and offer us a share of his cabin, wherein I soon became aware that he had two empty bunks; for he must have known that on taking us home at the conclusion of the voyage he would have been remunerated most liberally for all the expense we had put him to, and handsomely rewarded for the saving of our lives in addition. But instead of this, we were excluded from that cabin as rigorously and inflexibly as Bluebeard excluded Fatima from the chamber which was tenanted by his defunct spouses; and even if we were caught aft anywhere near the hatchway, which was directly over it, we were chivied away as boys ashore are chivied when detected looting a garden or an orchard.

Tom Trevor declared that the schooner was a pirate, and that the cabin was full of weapons, ammunition, and outlandish dresses, which would be donned anon; also that we were not let enter it lest we might rummage about and discover these things prematurely, by which he meant while we were still in waters that steamships daily traversed, one of which might at any time pass within hailing distance of us.

He remarked upon, as another reason for his opinion, the ruffianly look of many of the crew; the fact that we had four "black savages" on board, who seemed to do nothing but eat their rations, and squat about the decks playing some sort of game with a lot of small bones; and also the general laxness of discipline, which indeed I had observed myself.

As for Tom's "savages," their appearance certainly did not belie the name that he had given them, for, unlike the mild Australian natives, these fellows were of a most ferocious and powerful appearance, and whilst their faces were quite hairless, the wool on the tops of their heads assumed the dimensions and the shape of an Indian sowar's turban. A porcupine's quill ran through each of their noses, and after we had been out three or four days, running all the while nor'-nor'-east before a light breeze, and so had got into a still hotter region, these odd beings discarded every particle of clothing, and then for the first time seemed to be at their ease.

"Yes, they'll be the chief throat-cutters by and by," Tom said *sotto voce* more than once; and 'twas quite useless for me to endeavour to persuade him that they were most likely harmless Polynesians returning to their native island, amongst scores of which the *Centurion* might be about to cruise, as many other such vessels did, disposing of merchandise in return for fruit, grain, and oil; indeed, when I once ventured to inquire of Captain Massingham whither he was bound, he had answered me smilingly with—"Through the Coral Sea to New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, with wool, cotton, tobacco, pearl-shell, tortoise-shell, *bêche-de-mer*, rum, and sugar."

This had been in the early times, when he looked mild, smooth-shaven, and minister-like; but as his beard grew his manner changed with the expression of his face, so that his original lamb-like aspect borrowed first the cunning of the fox and then the fierce and hungry look of the wolf; though each fresh characteristic did not supplant those which he had possessed before, but was merely added to them, so that his disposition was continually varying, and you knew not for five minutes at a time which of the three animals that I have named he would next resemble; therefore it was that he would now and then pat Tom or me on a shoulder and salute us as "dear boy," and almost with the next breath would be cursing us, whilst kicking us about the deck for some slight forgetfulness or imaginary fault on our parts, until sometimes we could scarcely stand for hours afterwards.

As for the first mate, whom I had heard so pertinently ask, "Why we ever *should* return home?" I am convinced that he soon grew to hate the very sight of us. He never called us by a more complimentary title than "Longshore Lubbers," and his least complimentary ones I would not dare to record.

Meanwhile the *Centurion* lost the wind and failed to find it again, so that for a week we lay

"As idle as a painted ship, upon a painted ocean,

with the pitch bubbling out of the seams in the deck, and burning and blistering our feet as we walked them, and our snowy cotton, fine-weather canvas flapping against our masts as we rose and fell to the mighty Pacific swell, whose crestless billows had an oily look,

despite their deep cobalt blue hue, and were dotted with sea-birds in all directions.

This delay did not improve the captain's or the mate's tempers, but they utilized the time in a way that added to Tom's and my alarm, for every one was set to work to hoist up six big, old-fashioned cannon out of the hold, where we discovered them hidden beneath a lot of lumber, with round shot and kegs of gunpowder to keep them company; and when, after tremendous labour, the crew had got guns, shot, and powder up on deck, the cannon were placed in position thereon, with their muzzles against what were evidently concealed portholes, but which most likely could be knocked open in the briefest possible time. Here they were covered over again with old sails, tarpaulins, and what not, with an evident attempt at fresh concealment.

Now, whilst we were down in the hold, assisting the crew as before-mentioned, both Tom and I observed some very strange things, the first of which was that the schooner, instead of being laden with merchandise, carried hardly anything on board of her; and the second, that the bottom of the hold, and also the sides thereof up to a certain height, were thick-set with huge iron rings, to which short lengths of strong chain were attached, terminated by what looked like open handcuffs, and in some instances iron collars. There was also a disagreeable stench about the place, it being a kind of oily, animal smell; and when I mentioned it to one of the sailors who had shown me a kindness or two, he observed in a knowing yet mysterious manner, "Black Ivory," winking one eye the while, and then laying a finger on his lips to imply silence and caution.

If he meant his words for an explanation he might

just as well have kept them to himself for all the enlightenment that they afforded me, because black ivory was a product that I had never heard of, nor could Tom Trevor tell me anything about it either.

A little after this the captain informed us one day that we were in the Coral Sea, and we saw several small islands, well stocked with trees, though apparently almost on a level with the water's edge, at no great distance from us. The water, too, had changed its colour from cobalt to ultramarine blue, and sharks seemed to swarm in it.

When I came on deck the next morning it was to behold a new phenomenon, for the ocean was grey-white with pumice-stone, which also lay on our decks to a depth of half-an-inch.

I was told that it came from a volcano situate on an island which lay at some distance away, and was by then out of sight. The sailors did not seem to know its name, and one said with a laugh that "it was always at some such pranks;" whilst another added that "it had given out a good blaze all through the night, and so had perhaps saved us from running slap on it, as we might otherwise have done, because the skipper had been too drunk to know well what he was about during the whole of his watch on deck."

All that day, the wind holding steady, and consequently giving us little work with the sails, we were sitting on deck cleaning muskets and pistols, and furbishing up cutlasses, all of which were brought out of the captain's cabin, thus proving one of Tom's predictions to have been tolerably correct, and encouraging him to hazard a great many more, most of which were of a very awful nature; indeed he had of late seemed

to take a kind of morbid pleasure in trying to frighten both himself and me, despite which I thought that I perceived, and glad enough I was to do it, that he was getting back a good deal of his old pluck, just as a fellow gets his second wind during a paper-chase or a good bout at fisticuffs, you know.

In fact I liked him better, I think, than I had ever done, though well aware the while that I should never regard him as in any way a superior being again. As a counterpoise to this he had altogether ceased to "patronize" me as in olden times, whilst all his vanity and coxcombry had been knocked, kicked, and bullied out of him; and, as I now thought, though I certainly shouldn't have done so a fortnight previously, he was much improved by their loss.

CHAPTER IV.

A TRANSFORMATION.—"FEATHERS," "BOILS," "DOUBLE-FACE," AND "GREEN-WHISKERS."

I HAVE not time to tell you nearly all the incidents of our voyage, which was both a very long and a very short one; that is to say, short with respect to distance, for it could not have exceeded fifteen hundred miles, but long as regarded the time that it took us to do it in, which was just six weeks; for in tropical latitudes calms are frequent, and progress consequently very slow.

One morning, however, we found ourselves lying off

a beautiful island, with bold and rocky coast-lines, deeply indented bays, and covered with the most luxuriant vegetation, the scent of its flowers coming out to us whilst we were as much as a marine league away.

It was a pretty sight to our sea-wearied eyes, yet nevertheless mine and Tom's were soon attracted inboard once more by the sudden appearance on deck of our four idle, rum-swilling "savages," who I had especially noticed hadn't been ordered to do the slightest work during the entire voyage, yet, nevertheless, had been fed on the best food that the vessel afforded, and that without stint, though they had enormous appetites, and gorged themselves until sometimes they could hardly get up from the deck, on which they sprawled, naked, fat, and inert, nearly all day long, glistening like polished ebony with oils with which they were constantly rubbing themselves or each other.

But now, what a change ! One of them wore a three-foot-high head-dress of feathers, and similar plumes, looking as though they had been borrowed from a hearse, rose like an inky fountain from each brawny shoulder. His chest was covered with necklaces of sea-shells, and he wore anklets and bracelets of the same, carrying in his hand a formidable club.

The second savage had painted his face a brilliant yellow, but had artistically dotted it with red spots resembling well-developed boils, by way of relief. His turban-like mass of hair he had dyed sky-blue, and some blue birds, beasts, and fishes were traced in outline on his vast breast. His arms were tied round and round with strings of shells, and so were his legs, and this was his sole attempt at dress ; but he also had a club.

The third, with some sort of red ochre, had converted his aldermanic corporation into a seeming frightful face (such as used to be depicted on Chinese shields), the eyebrows and long dependent beard having evidently been fashioned out of an ancient red-dyed skin mat. Above his plump, round belly face he had twisted several folds of sky-blue chintz so tightly around his waist that it evidently interfered with his respiration, yet looked as though it formed a head-dress to the face beneath, whilst his actual one was striped with blue and red bars, the woolly superstructure set off with little interlaced ribands of the same colour, and a stuffed Australian parrot (a genuine Blue Mountain macaw) was strapped on to his left shoulder. He carried in his left hand three long and slender spears.

The fourth and last of these Polynesian "mashers" had twisted and tortured his mauve-dyed hair into a chignon, and wore perched on the very top of it a lady's bonnet, all French flowers and black lace. His face was painted in diagonal stripes, magenta and pea-green, and all round his jaws and chin he had stuck a dark-green woollen fringe, edged with gimp, by way of whiskers. A very good representation of a crab was drawn on each breast, and a chain of tortoise-shell rings hung from his ears to his shoulders, on each of which was painted an open-mouthed face, with a long red tongue that reached down the outside of each pertaining arm almost to the elbow. From the waist downwards he had seemingly deemed himself unworthy of, or else too beautiful to need ornamentation, except as regarded a gay carpet-slipper on his right foot, and a rusty spur girt around his left ankle. His weapons were

a bow and arrows, and he evidently considered himself to be in all respects the "pick of the bunch."

Was it any wonder that our attention was diverted from the beauties of nature to that of art, or that we wondered what this brilliant transformation scene could portend?

Whilst doing so we fixed upon our gorgeous savages the nicknames of "Feathers," "Boils," "Double-face," and "Green-whiskers," as being descriptive of their appearance, handy for the construction of our mouths (their proper patronymics being some yards in length each, and regular jaw-breakers besides), and easy to be remembered.

But the change from chrysalis to butterfly in the appearance of our dusky passengers was far from being the only surprise that was in store for us; the next thing that happened being the turning out of Captain Massingham, his mates, and all the crew as though the *Centurion* was a swell yacht, and they were preparing to receive some very distinguished personages on board.

The skipper was clean-shaven once more, wore spectacles, a claw-hammer coat, a chimney-pot hat, white cravat, and black gloves, so that before I caught a full view of his face, I wondered whether a chaplain had come aboard out of the sea, in the same manner as I'd often read of King Neptune doing when a ship is crossing the line.

As for the mates, they had as many gilt buttons on their coats, and as much gold lace around their caps and sleeves, as though they had been in the P. & O. Service, and the erst dirty, tarry foremast hands looked as spick and span as men-o'-war's men when preparing to receive an admiral aboard.

Before Tom and I could take note of anything further, the skipper came up to us, and laying a hand on each of our shoulders said, in a really paternal manner—"Go below, my lads, and put your shore toggery on; the same that you were brought on board in. You shall see something of yonder beautiful island whilst we lie off it, and we shall do so for some days I make no doubt, in order to trade with the natives."

"What island is it, sir?" asked Tom, the changed aspect of the captain encouraging him to put the question, for outward appearance had always a very great effect upon him.

"Well—er—er—er—it's one of the Solomon group, commonly called the Isle of Danger. Longitude one sixty-nine, twenty-eight west. Latitude ten, fifteen south. But go and change your clothes, go and change your clothes, for we expect visitors shortly," and the skipper, looking somewhat confused the while, walked hurriedly away from us.

Of course we were ready to do as he had bidden us, but on our way to the fore hatch we couldn't help looking down into the captain's cabin through the open skylight of the after one; perhaps by reason that it so seldom was open, or it might have been because, having already had so many surprises, we were inclined to look for fresh ones anywhere and everywhere.

Be that as it may, we certainly had a new surprise in return for our peep, for the cabin table was laid with quite a feast; an island of boiled rice surrounded by a sea of jam being the most conspicuous dish, next to that of a huge three-decker sea-pie; whilst the captain's bunk, as well as the two empty ones, of which I have

before made mention, were as full of wine and spirit bottles, as an over-ripe cheese is of maggots.

Well, this mystery was too puzzling for us even to attempt a solution of it, so we went forward to the fore-castle, and in our respective berths found the clothing wherein we had nearly paid an involuntary call upon Davy Jones a few weeks previously.

Tom Trevor put on his, with evidently the most intense satisfaction, but this feeling changed into a state of mental anguish when he discovered how the salt water had shrunk the material.

I couldn't help laughing at him, and saying that if he wished to make an impression on the dusky belles of the island, he would do better to copy the fashions as set us by Feathers, Boils, Double-face, and Green-whiskers, than to trust to those of Brisbane tailors; and I promised him that if he'd strip to the skin, I'd ornament him from head to foot with the signs of the zodiac, the twenty-four capital letters, and a few problems out of Euclid; or cover him with hearts and darts and Cupids, whichever he preferred.

He was in no mood for a joke, however, but began to bewail the loss of an eye-glass, and that he hadn't got a pair of straps to lug his trousers a little further down over his boots with.

Thereat I lost my temper somewhat, and said, "For goodness' sake aim at being a man instead of a tailor's dummy," and as a sailor at the moment came into the fore-castle who had shown me a kindness or two, and who was by no means so great a ruffian as most of his fellows, I asked what island it was that we were lying off, and he at once exclaimed—

"Sure and it's New Ireland; and to the left of it, if

your eyes are strong enough, you may espy the eastern coast of New Britain as well, and it's known to most folks that if *old* Britain don't keep her eyes skinned, Germany will precious soon bag them both. At present they're no man's land as it were, an' that's why the old 'un is going to play the same little game on there that we used to do at Fidgee before it was made a Crown Colony in 1874, and kidnapping the natives put a stop to. But for goodness' sake don't let slip what I've told you."

Of course we promised that we wouldn't, and we guessed that the man had been drinking on the sly, or he wouldn't have let so much slip. I made a great effort to draw more out of him, but he was on his guard now, and evidently also alarmed at what he had said already, whilst a sudden and tremendous row, rising apparently from the water all round us, gave him a good excuse for returning hurriedly to the deck; and, as you may suppose, Tom Trevor and I were not slow in following his example.

A strange scene at once greeted our eyes. We were close in to the shore, that is to say, within a mile or so, and innumerable canoes, crowded with naked savages, literally swarmed around us, their crews yelling and gesticulating, and waving their paddles, but not brandishing any weapons, though we could see, and they made no attempt to disguise the fact, that their long, narrow, lofty-prowed, and elaborately-carved boats were tolerably well packed with bows and arrows, spears, and war clubs.

We could perceive, too, that the milk-white sands of the neighbouring shore were crowded with similar-looking savages, but composed of women and children

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as well as men ; and amongst them, so rarefied and clear was the atmosphere, we could make out a lot of dogs, and some way in the rear a village, standing under the shade of some lofty palm-trees.

CHAPTER V.

WE ARRIVE OFF NEW IRELAND, AND HOLD A GRAND RECEPTION OF NATIVES.

As a strong swell was setting in shore, and carrying the *Centurion* with it, orders were now given to let go the anchor, which found bottom in about twelve fathoms of water. Sail had of course been previously taken in, and both things were done as quietly as though we had just reached a home port instead of a known cannibal island, hundreds of whose armed natives were surrounding us almost menacingly, whilst we hardly exceeded a dozen in number, that is to say, minus Feathers, Boils, Double-face, and Green-whiskers ; and neither Tom nor I felt at all sure that their friendship would count for much, handsomely though they certainly had been treated.

As for precautions against treachery or attack, the six old smooth-bore cannon showed their teeth at last, and through open ports as well, and we guessed, though we were by no means sure, that they were loaded ; but neither our officers nor our crew exhibited any weapons upon their persons, and this fact they seemed anxious rather than otherwise to make apparent.

Having especially noted all these things, we were anxious to see what would happen next, and we hadn't very long to wait, for Feathers, Boils, Double-face, and Green-whiskers began to harangue the savages in the boats, who seemed to be greatly impressed by their appearance, and little wonder.

Double-face was the chief speaker, and a fine specimen of a stump orator he seemed to be, though we couldn't understand a word of what he said. We could see that the captain could, however, by the foxy look that every now and then came into his little grey eyes, though he was smiling at the black men in the boats all the while just as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

To our intense surprise the result of all this speechifying was that the islanders began to board us, leaving their weapons in the canoes, however.

Feathers, Boils & Co. took upon themselves to be Masters of the Ceremonies, and their fellow-blackamoors seemed to pay as much respect to them as though they had been kings, or some other such high mightinesses, suffering them to regulate how many should board us at a time, and so forth.

Independent of their having about the ugliest faces conceivable, our invaders were positively beautiful; hardly a form was there amongst them but would have served as a model for an Apollo; their plump and rounded limbs were without a sign of hair or muscle, and their flesh was as smooth and glossy as black velvet, their sole dress consisting of shark's-teeth necklaces, and a fringe made of a long green, tough species of grass around the loins, that answered all the requirements of decency.

But I must cut short description, and say that our visitors were shaken hands with one by one by the captain, and conducted to the cabin, where they were feasted to the very top of their bent, and then escorted to their boats again, though only to make way for fresh batches; and this sort of thing continued for hour after hour, until Feathers, Boils & Co. must have been heartily weary, I should think, of playing the rôle of Masters of the Ceremonies.

But apparently not a bit of it; and as the day wore on the quality of our visitors seemed to improve, and some island grandees at last condescended to board us, who cut almost as imposing an appearance as Feathers, Boils, Double-face, or Green-whiskers.

Amongst these was an herculean native with bright scarlet teeth, his hair powdered white with pounded sea-shells, and who wore a shirt made of plaited grass, and had a large red umbrella borne over his head by a beautiful naked boy, whose head was decorated with a pair of goat's horns.

To our surprise, and I think a little to our captain's consternation, whom the umbrella seemed to utterly confound, this "potent, grave, and reverend seignor" could speak a little English.

Directly Captain Massingham discovered, as he very soon did, that the owner of the swell umbrella was the head chief of that part of the island which we were lying off, his politeness knew no bounds, and even Feathers, Boils, Double-face, and Green-whiskers condescended to copy it.

"Red-teeth," as I shall call him, was conducted to the cabin with as much reverence as though he had been Queen Victoria in her Jubilee year, and I do

believe that had he asked for a slice of roasted boy by way of refreshment our skipper would have managed to humour him.

Happily perhaps for Tom Trevor and myself he took very kindly to sea-pie and old rum, having first spat a mouthful of champagne all over the table, a feat which was accompanied by an expression of countenance well calculated to turn cream sour; and I'm now describing what I actually beheld, for, to our intense astonishment, Tom and I were especially invited into the cabin to bear Red-teeth company, and I believe were introduced to him by Double-face as being very grand personages indeed, for he straightway "kotoed" to us, and began to treat the skipper as a very secondary personage—conduct which I detected that individual quietly chuckling at behind his back, half opening and taking a sly peep inside the scarlet umbrella the while; which, no sooner had he done, than he gasped out the word "German," and was evidently so overcome by the discovery, that he very nearly dropped the perhaps in those latitudes sacred symbol of sovereignty on his toes.

However, Red-teeth eventually quitted us much as lesser folks had done, only with a great deal more of ceremony, and so on with others, until when at length the last canoe was paddled shoreward, almost as many sharks immediately commenced to navigate the waters in their place; the sun sank like a great ball of fire into an apparent sea of blood, and, five minutes later, the stars looked down upon us out of an indigo-hued sky, and it was night.

Well, to cut a long story short, Captain Massingham and his mates, in company with Feathers, Boils & Co.,

seemed from that day forth to have a fine time of it, for they were (having purchased a welcome, so to speak) continually going ashore, and returning aboard of an evening laden with spoils of the chase.

They also appeared to be combining business with pleasure, for canoes were continually coming out to us, laden with cocoa-nuts, bread-fruit, yams, nutmegs and other spices, plantains, palm-oil, and other island products.

All this didn't, however, tend to comfort either Tom Trevor or myself, for the captain, as the reader will doubtless remember, had promised us some runs ashore, and now he seemed to have forgotten all about it.

We shouldn't have been boys hadn't we chafed considerably at this, and one day, upon his returning to the schooner in apparently an even better temper than usual, I ventured to remind him of the matter, and he then answered me with—

"Yes, yes, my lad, I don't forget, and before we sail away you shall have seen as much of the island as your hearts can desire. Roongatira, the chief with the red teeth, has asked after you this very day. He has sons of his own, and of about your ages, and he has invited you to spend a night and a day ashore, when you will see a lot of wonderful things, I promise you;" and he concluded with a strange-sounding chuckle that I didn't like half as well as his words; indeed, to tell the truth, it made my blood run cold, though I could not for the life of me have given a reason for the feeling, on which account I soon dismissed it as absurd.

Some few days after this, by which time we had taken aboard as much produce as the natives apparently had to sell, Tom and I learnt that the captain was going

to give another grand "blow out," as the sailors called it, to the natives; this time a farewell one, and that as an additional and long-promised treat they were to be taken for a short trip up and down the coast in the "winged canoe," as they were accustomed to call the schooner.

This trip was to be a moonlight one, both because it would be pleasanter on account of the coolness, and by reason that a very fierce and cannibal tribe, with whom our friendly natives were constantly at war, lived "three bays up the coast," and they were afraid that in the daytime they might put to sea in their war canoes, and manage first to capture and then to devour them.

Later in the day Captain Massingham told us much of this, also that Roongatira, *alias* Red-teeth, had declined to be of the excursion party, but had invited Tom and me to visit him whilst so many of his people were away, as he could then offer us better accommodation, and so forth.

I have often thought since what fools we both must have been to have believed such a lot of transparent humbug; but then we were young, green,—yes, *very* green, and surrounded by everything that was strange and novel, and that therefore could not be tried and weighed by the test of our past experience.

The consequence was, that after seeing the farewell feast laid out, and helping to sort and arrange almost a heaped wheelbarrow full of cheap but gaudy presents (worth perhaps a shilling a dozen wholesale) for the expectant visitors and voyageurs, we arrayed ourselves in our best attire, and were rowed ashore in the captain's own boat, sitting in the stern sheets just as

though we were two officers, and I'm sure Tom Trevor felt as big as though he were a Lord High Admiral.

CHAPTER VI.

WE BECOME THE GUESTS OF THE CHIEF OF THE SCARLET UMBRELLA.

As we touched the shore, the canoes containing the visitors to the *Centurion* put off from it, amidst much shouting and yelling, and bobbing of prodigious wool-crowned heads at Tom Trevor and myself; but we were too anxious to witness the wonders of an unknown land to make any but the briefest of responses.

Having landed us, our boat was pulled back to the schooner, and a minute later, surrounded by a grinning crowd, we were being escorted inland, over ground that was carpeted with moss and flowers, and under the shade of trees that were laden with ripe fruit of every conceivable kind and hue.

Proceeding in this way for nearly half-a-mile, we arrived at a clearing, where, within a rude stockade that was o'ershadowed by lofty palm-trees, we came suddenly upon a native village, consisting of round walled and domed huts, built apparently of mud, which had been allowed to dry in the sun until it resembled cement.

Some of these huts had a loose, leafy thatch stuck a-top of them, looking like broad-brimmed hats perched upon bald pates; but fronting a sort of square in the

centre of the hamlet was a large, oblong, roughly-hewn wooden structure, neatly thatched with palm-leaves, and in front of it a post was planted in the ground that was surmounted by a raw and still bleeding head.

This gruesome spectacle very naturally caused us a thrill of horror, but it gave way to surprise when we beheld a naked man running, in a crouching attitude, between two rows of women, each of whom hit him a blow with a stick as he passed along, and frequently hard enough to extract a yell of pain from the stricken one; which seemed to proclaim that Home Rule, only of a somewhat different type, was the order of the day in New Ireland as much as in Old Ireland.

As we drew nearer, the dusky Venuses desisted from their labours to stare at us, and their victim, striped all over with bleeding weals, embraced the opportunity to sneak quietly away. The punishers were evidently all of them matrons, and we could see at a glance that dressmakers' and milliners' bills never became a terror to husbands in this happy land.

The young girls wore, like the women, grass fringes round their loins, and in addition natural flowers in their hair, which was very long, slightly wavy, and abundant in quantity. In form and grace of movement they were perfection, but their faces were not at all attractive. The children of both sexes were perfectly lovely, all save their faces again, and the dogs were as hideous as those that Chinamen design in their pottery, and apparently *dumb*.

We had scarcely observed all this, when we found ourselves inside the big oblong house, where the first live thing that we saw was a cat, or at least it was more like a cat than anything else; and though Tom declared

it wasn't, because it didn't answer to the name of "puss," and squalled at us like a baby afflicted with wind, instead of miaowing, I believe that it was a species of cat to this day.

A minute later we were received by Red-teeth, with his scarlet umbrella borne over his head by his horned page as usual, so that I began to wonder whether he slept so, for an open umbrella indoors was quite a novelty to me.

He received us with intense urbanity, but seemed to think that Tom, in his swell yachting dress, was the grander personage of the two; indeed he had done so all through our acquaintance with him, which indeed was hardly to be wondered at, for an ill-fitting suit of dark tweed, a turn-down collar, and a black necktie was hardly a costume calculated to impress savages, more especially one who, in addition to a scarlet umbrella and red teeth, now wore three birds of paradise on his head, with their tails and plumage interlaced until they assumed the shape of a Brobdignagian turban, bands of shark's teeth across his forehead, a sky-blue sea-shell between his eyes, a green one stuck on each of his brows, a long stick passed through his nose and tasselled at its terminations, and a stuffed mouse hanging from each ear by its tail, and all this in addition to bands of teeth and shells, that jangled on each limb as he moved. His breast was notched with scars, each one of which he very proudly explained to us represented an enemy whom he had killed in battle.

Presently he led us into a vast chamber, whose wooden walls were hung all round with weapons, and its floors strewn with the skins of animals that had been slain in the chase. Here he introduced us to his

two sons, boys of about our own age, naked and undecorated, the latter perhaps because they had as yet done nothing to deserve such ornamentation. They received us as though they didn't consider us to be "any great shakes," but this might have been from mere shyness.

We were now bade to sit down upon the skins, and a feast was brought in by some hideous old hags (the cooks probably), who would have frightened away the witches in *Macbeth*.

They bore sundry wooden trays, heaped up with roasted yams, bread-fruit, young cocoa-nuts, sugar-cane, plantains, roasted wild hog, and some kind of fish baked in leaves. For drinks there were huge calabashes filled with water, and some with what looked like milk, and one or the other was presented to each person's lips as he asked for it, but no one partook of the meal with us except the chief and his two sons.

I wish that I could describe more particularly to you what succeeded to it, but I really cannot, and the reason is that the stuff which looked and even tasted so much like milk was either drugged or else was naturally intoxicating; I am inclined to believe it was the latter.

In any case, all things that came under my gaze after partaking somewhat freely of it, appeared to me more like the incidents of a dream than sober realities. I've a confused recollection that a lot of natives came in and squatted on their haunches all round the walls of the great chamber, each third one holding a lighted torch in his hand, and that by their lurid glare a score of beautiful girls danced before us, and then a number of men, the performance of the latter being as terrific

as the evolutions of the former were graceful and rhythmical, for they brandished weapons, yelled, made the most hideous faces, and stamped with their feet until the entire building shook.

After this I seem to remember that various small animals were brought in, and made to fight each other; that a repulsive-looking old fellow played with snakes, suffered centipedes of nearly a foot in length to run all over him, and scrunched up scaly scorpions between his teeth for our delectation; that finally Tom and I were presented with some very large and exquisitely beautiful flowers, which turned to the colour of dead leaves, and shrivelled up into almost nothing at our mere touch, and that then we were taken into a small room furnished with two heaped-up piles of skin mats, and told that they were our beds, and that after a good night of sleep we should be taken for a day's hunting and shooting, and I wondered vaguely what there was to hunt, and what the black fellows shot with.

CHAPTER VII.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SEA.—ABANDONED, IMPRISONED, AND KEPT FOR EATING.

SLEEP? Yes, it was all very well to tell us to sleep, but quite an impossible matter to do it, for the mosquitoes began to attack us in the dark like raging lions, and I do believe that had we taken off our things they would have nearly bled us to death.

Happily, owing to some doubts as to the cleanness of

our couches, we had lain down with all our clothes on, and so they could only get at our faces and hands. However, to this very fact of being kept awake we perhaps owed our lives, and I will tell you how.

A couple of hours might have elapsed, and the effects of the intoxicating milk had quite passed away from us, when a strong light shone suddenly in at the numerous chinks in our bedroom wall, peeping through a couple of which, we looked into the great reception hall in which we had been feasted and entertained, and by the light of a single torch that was fixed in a bracket, and apparently had been just illumined, we beheld Red-teeth, divested of all his gorgeous and unique decorations, standing in the centre of the floor, and listening with intense excitement or rage to a savage, whose long hair hung limply down his back, dripping with trickling streams of water that ran from off his glossy black loins to the floor.

He was panting, trembling, pouring forth a torrent of words, and accompanying them by so eloquent and expressive a pantomime, that both Tom and I could clearly understand the purport of his communication, even though we could not have translated a single word that he uttered.

Yes, wonderful as it may seem, we could distinctly make out, by his actions, his glances, and his face contortions, that the captain of the *Centurion* had made prisoners of all his invited guests, and by the most abominable act of treachery had first made them drunk, and then consigned them to captivity and chains in the darkness of the hold, finally hoisting his sails and standing out to sea, with the evident intention of never returning to New Ireland again.

Yes, we understood all, and a terrible understanding it was, for with it came the conviction that we had been really sent ashore as hostages, and that Captain Massingham had sailed away with the pleasant thought that *we* should be sacrificed by the savages for *his* treachery, and that by this infamous device he had solved the riddle which I had heard his brutal mate put to him, of "Why should they *ever* return home?" at the time when he had been apprehensive because Tom's father was a magistrate, and feared that if he took us back we should "blab," and so get him into mischief; for though the kidnapping of South Sea Islanders, to work in the Queensland sugar and rice plantations, was encouraged by the planters, and winked at by some of the authorities, yet what was and is still practically a slave-trade could not be ignored if brought directly under judicial notice, when a heavy fine and confiscation of the slaver was the least that would ensue.

We had scarcely thought of all this, and scared ourselves almost out of our lives in the process, when Red-teeth snatched down a long goat-horn from the wall, and blew a loud but tremulous blast thereon, which brought a whole crowd of staring-eyed savages into his presence, half-a-dozen words to whom seemed to sufficiently explain what had happened, when, grasping every species of barbarous weapon, and bellowing and stamping like bulls, the whole party came straight towards our bed-chamber.

Another moment and the door was torn open, and we were sighted, clutched at, and dragged into the great room, Tom pallid and wild-eyed with terror, whilst I dare say that I was looking just as frightened

though, as there was no mirror at hand, I can't say for certain.

Here Red-teeth began to rave at us in broken English, the foam of rage flying from his lips the while.

He declared that forty-five of his people had been lured on board the "winged canoe," made drunk, and forced to put marks on papers, and that then the floor had opened under them, and they had fallen into a black hole, and the "pale-faces" had gone down and fastened them with chains, only one man succeeding in gaining the deck and springing overboard; which man, after swimming a great way, had got back, and now stood there, and he concluded by pointing out to us the still sea-dripping savage who had brought him the dire news.

In vain I tried to persuade him that Tom and I were not accountable for anything that had happened, and that had we even guessed what our captain was about to do, nothing on earth would have tempted us to come ashore.

My specious pleading was all thrown away. At a sign from the chief the Papuans (for to that race do the inhabitants of New Ireland belong) threw themselves upon us, took off our clothes with the dexterity with which some cooks will skin eels, poked at and prodded us with their fingers, just as judges poke and prod prize beasts at a cattle show, and finally smacked their lips, evidently at contemplation of my plumpness and the delicate whiteness of Tom's skin.

When I observed this, and also the way in which their mouths worked, and how they patted their stomachs, a horrible conviction came home to me that they were

viewing us from a culinary rather than from an artistic point of view, and had arrived at the conclusion that we would make somewhat dainty dishes.

The examination over, we were ordered to put on our clothes again, perhaps in order to prevent the mosquitoes from getting the lion's share of us, and directly we were re-garbed, our arms were seized hold of, and we were led out of the chief's house, and past the pole that was crowned with the gory human head, until, amidst the clusters of beehive-shaped huts, we came to one unoccupied.

Inside this we were thrust, and therein secured, whilst, for our further safe keeping, two savages stationed themselves outside as guardians of the "larder," with war clubs big enough to brain an ox with, and a sheaf of long, reedy yelemens, or spears, which they stood against the wall of the hut.

We could see all this through the apology for a door, which was a very rough and primeval construction indeed, and through the same yawning fissures we could perceive a hideous wooden idol, some eight feet in height, and half human and half bestial in its characteristics, that stood beneath a tall cocoa-nut tree exactly opposite, with a trough in front of it that was painted bright red, and was hideously suggestive of blood flowing from frequent sacrifices.

With the exception of the savages who had pounced upon, maltreated, and imprisoned us, no one seemed to know of what had occurred, so we concluded that the chief's special guards had alone taken part in the proceedings, and that by his orders the affair had been kept quiet, perhaps because he intended us for his own special table, or feared that we might be injured in

appearance or in flavour if the tagrag and bobtail had the plucking, the trussing, and the basting of us.

These surmises on our parts may sound comical enough in print, but I can assure you that they were very much the reverse in reality, for I had both heard and read that all Papuans were cannibals, and that though some tribes had publicly renounced the diet, they returned to it again upon only very slight temptation.

Poor Tom was in a truly pitiable state of funk, and kept on increasing my fears and his own by asking me, between his blubberings, whether I thought they would roast or boil us, and if the latter, if it were at all likely that they would pop us alive into hot water, like lobsters?

I told him that I'd livelier things to think about, in the shape of how we were to escape such a fate altogether; whereat he declared that to do such a thing was impossible, and almost in the same breath asked me how I thought of managing it.

"Well," I rejoined, "I've a good strong knife in my pocket, and I shouldn't fancy that these mud walls were much harder to carve than a wedding-cake. If so, we could scoop a hole big enough to creep through in less than an hour, and then if we could only reach the beach, we might put off in one of their canoes, and be out of sight ere the morning."

"Oh lor'!" groaned Tom, "what a lot of 'ifs' and risks. And what do you think that our guards will be doing all the while?"

"I believe they'll be sleeping, as I'm precious sure they are at present, for those sounds are uncommonly like snores that I hear. As to our making any noise

that will be at all likely to arouse them whilst carving away at mere wattle and dab, such as I'm sure these walls are built of, that's all nonsense," I made answer, as cheerily as I could.

"But the sharks, and thirst, and famine, even if we *do* manage to get to sea?" croaked Tom Trevor between his sniffings and snufflings.

This put me clean out of temper, and so I said to him sternly—

"Now, look here. Can we be in a worse pickle than what we are, and so mustn't any change be for the better? If you don't think so, then you just stop here and welcome, but don't say another word to discourage *me*, for I want every ounce of pluck that I can scrape together, because I mean to go through with what I've determined on, and chance it. Come, what are you really going to do?"

"I—should—like—to—go—with—you," was the reply.

"Then," answered I, "you'll have to do a fair share of the work; and what's more, I mean to be the head boss, and so you will have to implicitly obey me. Just bear in mind, too, that I don't mean to lose a single chance of escape through any weakness on your part—and by weakness I mean funk. No, lad, you'll have to stick to me and support me, and follow me through thick and thin, for if I find myself in a big mess I shan't trouble to look about and around for *you*."

"All right," answered Tom, in a resigned yet at the same time dolefully determined sort of way, which gave me some confidence that he could *now* be depended on, for though I'd talked as a hero, I didn't feel the least bit like one, my heart having sunk as low as

the bottoms of my boots, and my nerves being all at sixes and sevens; whilst as for really escaping without Tom, I hope that under any circumstances I wouldn't have been mean enough to try; and, not to make a virtue of my sentiments, I knew very well that I couldn't, for the simple reason that the Papuans had not a canoe small enough for a single individual to manage.

Well, no time was to be lost in "yabber-yabber," as our "black-fellas" call it, and so I whipped out my knife, and set to work with a will at the wall of the hut which was opposite to the door, against which our sable guards were reclining sound asleep.

To my joy it proved to be very soft indeed, for owing to the dampness of the climate it was almost like cutting putty. Of course in the centre we came across closely-woven wattle wands, or their equivalent, which formed the real frame-work of the hut; but a sailor's jack-knife, and mine happily was such a one, was more than equal to cutting a quick and almost noiseless way through even them, so that, working by turns, within the promised hour we really had tunnelled a hole large enough for us to creep through, and we lost no time in doing it.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE ESCAPE, AND ENCOUNTER MANY PERILS, BUT
SEEMINGLY TO NO PURPOSE.

THE village was very quiet, and our guards had evidently not taken alarm, for they were still snoring on the other side of the hut. For a moment I reflected whether it would be advisable to steal round and endeavour to rob them of their weapons, but I quickly decided that it would not, because if our escape was discovered and we were pursued, it would be by the entire population, and our killing or wounding one or two of them would in all probability only have the effect of bringing down upon ourselves torture as an antecedent to death. I didn't tell Tom Trevor what I had been thinking of, but laid hold of his arm and pointed in the direction that I believed we had to take in order to reach the sea.

He nodded comprehension, and then off we started, picking our way around the different clusters of huts, until we came in sight of the stockade that surrounded the entire village.

I had been fearful lest we should find it closed or guarded, or even both, as would certainly have been the case had Red-teeth chanced to be at war with any neighbouring tribe. Happily we discovered an unguarded opening, which proved most conclusively that he was not. Stealing through it we were at once in the luxuriant tropical forest, whose almost every tree was

fruit-bearing, comprising cocoa-nuts, plantains, guavas, mangoes, custard-apples, bananas, loquats, and scores of others of which I have not the slightest knowledge.

I suggested to Tom that we should fill our pockets and hats and arms with these delicious fruits as we passed along; because, tossed into a canoe before we launched her, they would preserve us from hunger and thirst for days; and though he moaned out "Colic! cholera!" *sotto voce*, he took good care to imitate my example.

When we had left the village about a quarter of a mile in our rear, we were startled by a whole herd of peccaries, or wild pigs, breaking cover out of the dense ferns, and rushing past us squeaking with evident affright; and our own was increased when we heard a mighty roar echoing from the direction from which they had come, for it impressed us with the unpleasant belief, that some species of large wild beast was following them up, and failing to overtake them might content himself with us.

No sooner did Tom Trevor conceive this idea, than, happening at the same moment to catch a sight of the water, he dropped all the fruit that he had been carrying, and with a yell of terror made straight for it as hard as he could tear. I was by no means slow to follow his example, but knowing that to be starved would be as agonizing as to be eaten, I managed to carry all my fruit with me, and even then reached the shore nearly as soon as my companion, whom I found running up and down peering into canoe after canoe, and wringing his hands the while, as though he was in the last stage of despair.

"What's the matter now?" I asked.

"Paddles, paddles, there are no paddles—not in any of them," he rejoined; and at the intelligence I was almost as concerned as he was himself, for without any means of propulsion how were we to get far enough away from land to escape the long-range vision of the Papuans, when they at last came down to the shore and looked seawards for us, as I concluded that they would be quite sure to do, and more likely than not the very first thing? I might have expected this had I only given the subject thought, for it is not a usual thing to leave oars in a boat even on our own shores. However, I saw the necessity of putting the best possible face on the matter, and so, rolling my load of fruit into the bottom of the smallest of the canoes, I said with affected cheerfulness—

"Let us get her afloat and trust to luck. A current may serve our turn almost as well as oars, and I've observed that there were a lot of very strong ones all about the coast; the tide seems to be running out too, and it alone will bear us a long way from land. Why, I've known the tide to carry a boat out of sight between night and morning, so that we're not in so forlorn a plight after all."

"Oh lor'!" groaned Tom, evidently more than half inclined to give way to despair; but at that moment the wild beast who had occasioned him such a scare before was obliging enough to roar again, which spurred Tom to immediate action, so that lifting up one end of the light canoe I took up the other, and trotting down the beach and into the water almost up to our middles, we floated her and got aboard, Tom ejaculating the while—"Let us use our hands as paddles, for that wild beast may come after us into the sea—who knows?"

We found that the flats of our hands did propel the

light bark skiff along, though of course at no great speed. The receding tide helped us, however, and we were at last getting quite a respectable distance from the shore, when our anxiety returned, upon discovering that daylight was close at hand, for we had been flattering ourselves that the sun wouldn't rise for hours. Alas for our chances of escape! five or at most ten minutes after the first sign of dawn the sun is up, and throwing his golden beams right across the sea, in these tropical regions, knowing which our hopes sank below zero again.

But the crowning misfortune had yet to come, for presently we struck a current that was setting shorewards with great force and speed, so that we found ourselves approaching the land once more, and at thrice the swiftness that we had been borne away from it.

Tom now suggested the advisability of rolling ourselves overboard and drowning; not that he'd have had the pluck to have done it when it came to the point, as I knew very well; so I cut him up short by telling him not to be such a fool, and a shark with a small family of young ones turning up at the same moment in our wake, he answered me very humbly with "I won't."

"Then help me with your hands to keep the canoe's head straight," said I; "for if she drifts broadside on to this current she'll turn bottom up, and then those sea monsters will be scrunching our flesh and cracking our bones for us."

Tom did what I required of him, even at the risk of losing his hands, so I thought he deserved a bit of consolation, and happening to have a scrap of it to give him, I directed his attention to the fact that the current we were in promised to bear us around a projecting

headland, and thus land us in a different bay from that on whose shores Red-teeth and his tribe dwelt, so that by betaking ourselves to the shelter of the forest, on whose fruit we should be able to subsist for any length of time, we might be able to elude their search altogether.

This was a rosy view of our situation that I by no means entertained, at all events in its entirety, but I gave it to Tom Trevor for what it was worth, and was glad to see that he embraced it with avidity—just, in fact, as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

Well, my first prophecy proved a true one, for the current, just as the sun rose like a ball of burnished brass out of the sea, bore us around the before-mentioned long tongue of land, and into another and much smaller bay, which presented no appearance of human life whatever. It carried us close in to the shore, and lost much of its strength as it did so, wherefore we were able to paddle out of it with our hands, and five minutes later we had effected a landing. We were decidedly foolish in doing so. Our wisest course would have been to have gone on with the current, wherever it took us. I perceived this when it was too late, for no sooner had we got under cover of the trees than it struck me that we could not, after all, be more than three miles away from the Papuan village overland, and this was a very short distance for our foes to come in search of us.

Tom Trevor suddenly hinted as much to me, which showed that the same idea had occurred to both of us; but I told him that the savages would be sure to go first to the shore, and missing one of their canoes, they would put to sea after us; and then, upon failing to sight us, and knowing that we could have no paddles,

they would come to the conclusion that we had foundered, and then would go quietly home and trouble their heads no further about us.

I proposed, however, that as long as we could walk we should keep journeying on in a different direction to that of the settlement, and without losing sight of the sea if we could manage it, so that if a coaster were sailing anywhere near to the shore we should be able to get down thereto, and do all we could to signal her; and I finished up by reminding my companion, with a forced laugh, that the Union Jack patterned silk pocket-handkerchief that he had in the breast-pocket of his no longer swell yachting jacket had a chance at last, if hoisted on to the end of a long stick, of coming in useful. I didn't think that it ever would, though; but then it was no good to be down-hearted, and Tom required a lot of cheering up, for he'd begun to frighten himself about wild beasts again, and even the great green lizards, with wriggling tails and saucer-like eyes, that were frequently almost stepped on, made him shudder, and once or twice scream aloud.

I told him that if he did *that* any more I should "punch his head"; but, 'pon my word, the huge serpents, some with rainbow-hued tints, or bright crimson of hue, which every now and then raised their heads above the tall grass and hissed at us, frightened me until I could have done the same, had I not been so well aware that the doing it might have proved even more dangerous than their bite.

Every now and then we would be startled by a bird of paradise whirling and whirring by above our heads, and once a big monkey took to pelting us with guavas from a tree-top; and as one struck me full on

the nose, I was only thankful that it wasn't a cocoa-nut, which would infallibly have smashed that useful member, and perhaps my head as well.

But there were more deadly missiles than even cocoa-nuts not far off, as we were soon to learn to our cost, for we hadn't made our way through the beautiful tropical forest for more than a very few miles, the heat growing almost unbearable as the day advanced, when we all at once heard a yell, some distance in our rear, that I at once knew must be a Papuan war-whoop, though I believe that Tom set it down to be the devil.

CHAPTER IX.

A RACE FOR LIFE.—HOW "RULE, BRITANNIA"
FRIGHTENED THE SAVAGES.—ABOARD THE
'RAVEN.'

LOOKING around, I could see no signs of a foe at first, but as we hurried along there was a "whirr" in the air, and the next instant a yelemen, or spear, sank into the ground, with a quiver of its long, slender shaft, within a yard of Tom's heels.

He had been lagging behind me, complaining of exhaustion, and a score of lesser evils, for considerably more than an hour, but 'twas surprising what a reserve stock of energy he discovered himself to be possessed of at the sound of the war-whoop and at the sight of the spear, which, if hurled with a trifle more force, must have sunk into his back.

"Lord sake, come along," he cried, and you may be sure that I was by no means slow to accept the invitation; though, all the same, I couldn't see that in the end we had the slightest chance of escaping being either caught or killed, and I was quite aware that it didn't matter twopence-halfpenny which, because capture would only be preliminary to death, at any rate.

Glancing back, I could see that our pursuers numbered quite a score, and that Red-teeth and his two sons were well to the fore, and running, it struck me, as only hungry men would run in pursuit of a good dinner, though a London alderman in hot chase down Cheapside after an absconding turtle would certainly have presented a somewhat different appearance.

I was at all events rejoiced to see that the leaping, bounding, yelling pack of devil-hounds—for such they looked to me to be—didn't seem to have any bows and arrows with them, for I was fain to hope that at fair running we might be able to hold our own for a good while, since both Tom and I had won prizes at Brisbane running matches, and I had often heard my father say that even a Red Indian was no match, either as regarded speed or endurance, for a trained white.

I told Tom this as we bowled along side by side, urging him to run steadily, and keep his wind, and look well where he planted his feet, instead of behind him, as his terror was constantly urging him to do.

Our first instinct was to head for the water, but we were cut off from the bay in which we had beached the canoe, and a large mangrove swamp, swarming with serpents, and doubtless with other deadly reptiles and insects as well, now intervened between us and the sea.

But we strove with all our might to round this

swamp, in order to reach the shore again; *why*, it would have puzzled us to have told, except that there existed one chance in about a million that we might find some vessel lying off, and some of her crew landed on it. If not, we should be simply placing ourselves between innumerable sharks on one side, and our now deadly foes the Papuans on the other, leaving us the simple issue to consider as to whose teeth would hurt us most in the scrunching.

I think that I was fully aware of all this, yet nevertheless to gain the shore was still my only aim, as it evidently was also Tom's, though we hadn't breath enough to spare to compare opinions.

The Papuans weren't gaining upon us, that was one good thing, and it was proved by their continually-hurled yelemens falling much shorter of us than the first one had done, as also by the tone of their yells and screams, though the taunting speech that they hurled after us lost much of its effect because we didn't understand a word of it, and Red-teeth seemed to have forgotten in his fury all his broken English, or at all events he made no use of it.

On, on—it was a race between life and death, with the odds a million to one in favour of death. The perspiration was pouring off us in streams, and our legs had begun to tremble under us from weakness, when whilst we believed that we were still a long way from the shore, we came suddenly right upon it, owing to a bay abruptly indenting the coast for a great distance.

But not only did we behold the sea no more than a quarter of a mile below us, with a gentle and safe descent to it between hummocky sand-hills, but also a small steamer (evidently a gunboat) lying off the shore,

with a long whip-like pennant streaming out from below the truck of her foremast.

"Your Union Jack pocket-handkerchief—out with it, and flutter it as we run; the niggers will make all the noise that's wanted," I said gaspingly, and Tom was by no means slow in doing what I had advised.

Nevertheless, I could hardly see how those on board the gunboat could help even if they perceived us, for her anchor was down, and before she could land a boat's crew the Papuans would have time to catch and kill us half-a-dozen times over, for in five minutes more our race would be run, and we should be brought to bay by the water.

I looked back, and already they had left the forest behind them, and were bounding down over the sand-hummocks like a legion of fiends, for the sight of another vessel seemed to have aggravated their fury to downright madness.

A spear! Ah, it went over us. Our end was come at last, and the next instant we should be "porcupined" with them.

And we doubtless should have been, but for a sound that seemed suddenly to rend earth and sky. It was the familiar air of "Rule, Britannia," but played as a school of whales might have played it, had they been taught thus to perform with their blowers instead of merely using them as fountains.

The effect upon the Papuans was wonderful. They did not stay to hurl another spear at us, but rushed helter-skelter to the shelter of the forest, uttering yells of horror and dismay as they went.

As for Tom and I, we dragged ourselves down to the shore, I hardly know how, and remained there until

a boat was sent for us, when we were taken aboard the gunboat, which proved to belong to the Australian squadron, to be called the *Raven*, and to be cruising about the shores of these beautiful islands in order to ascertain whether New England and New Ireland had yet been transmogrified into "New Germany."

"Ah," observed her captain to us, laughing, "it was the voice of our steamer's siren that tamed the natives. You know the quotation—'Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast.' Well, our siren, whose tunes can be heard fifteen miles away, has often had at all events an equivalent effect, though the New Guineaites libel it by calling it 'A great big angry devil dog.' We, however, always find it quite safe to land anywhere after it has played a single tune, for not a native will show his nose in that region for a good forty-eight hours."

If our readers have ever heard a tune played on a powerful steam siren, or whistle, he will not be surprised at its effect upon ignorant and superstitious savages.

The *Raven* had almost completed her cruise, and two days later steamed straight away to Sydney, performing the journey in five days. From that port Tom and I returned home to Brisbane by an inter-colonial packet-boat, and were received by our parents as though we had been restored to them from the dead.

CONCLUSION.

AFTER the tale which Tom and I had to tell, Captain Massingham was not allowed to profit by his nefarious kidnapping expedition to New Ireland. Public opinion had been long opposed to this traffic in "Black Ivory," which was only distinguished from the regular slave-trade by the parties wronged going on board a vessel willingly, and putting their marks to engagements to work on Queensland sugar and rice plantations for a term of years and a nominal pay, whilst not knowing the least bit what they were about.

Boils, Feathers, Double-face, and Green-whiskers were sent back to their native Fiji, so that they should be no longer used as decoys; the duped Papuans were returned home at the Government expense; Captain Massingham was heavily fined and imprisoned in default of payment, and the *Centurion* was confiscated and turned to better uses.

As for New Britain and New Ireland, they have for the most part been converted into New Germany, to the intense disgust of all Australia, for both islands are almost marvellously fertile, possessing millions of acres of magnificent timber, and capable of producing cotton, coffee, rice, and tobacco in sufficient quantities to supply the whole world.

I am happy to say that Tom Trevor has discarded all foppery, abandoned braggadocio, and that we are now faster and firmer friends than we ever were.

A SLIP BETWEEN TWO OCEANS.

CHAPTER I.

CONTAINS A GOOD DEAL ABOUT THREE BANK CLERKS
AND A BIG DIAMOND.

IN the year 1869 I was junior clerk in a well-known Melbourne bank, and in the year 1870 I was on an uninhabited island, lying between three of the vastest oceans in the world, and having for my sole companion an erst fellow-clerk, who thirsted to spill my very life-blood. Our situation and this hatred alike rose from a big diamond and an old-fashioned silver watch of the turnip shape.

Having by this candid confession excited, I hope, my reader's curiosity, I will go on with my story in more orthodox fashion.

The bank in which I was employed was a proprietary one, and Messrs. Collins, Smith, and Tebb, as I will term them, owing to, for obvious reasons, not wishing to call them by their real names, were the partners.

I, Tom Collins, was the son of the head of the firm, and had a very good chance of being myself tacked on

to the tail of it when I had proved by a few years' steadiness, diligence, and business capacities that I was worthy of the position.

Our bank was very much like other banks, and our principals and clerks excessively like other principals and clerks in similar establishments, so there is no need for me to go into tiresome descriptions. A line or two therefore concerning those who will figure in this story, and I have done.

Jock Ogilvie was the reputed black sheep of our little flock, while Allan Fraser was deemed to be the very purest merino. Jock played billiards, went to races, smoked cigars before noon, and was often out after midnight; whereas Allan Fraser was a total abstainer, powerful at prayer meetings, and sometimes even did a little street preaching. Jock Ogilvie's eyes were dark and laughing; Allan Fraser's blue and grave, and the latter wore sedate side whiskers and shaved his upper lip and chin, while the former cultivated an upward-curved moustache and an imperial.

Yet, for all that, I liked the black sheep, and distrusted and detested the white one, not *because* of their distinctive ways and habits, but *despite* them; for, somehow or other, I could not help thinking that Jock Ogilvie was gold in grain, and that Allan Fraser was of the "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal" order of young man. After events will prove to the reader whether I was right or wrong.

Our bank was very old-established and very popular. In 1850 it had been a wooden one; 1860 had changed it into brick; only eight years later it developed into a pretentious structure of stone that would have challenged notice and admiration even in the city of London.

Our great, and indeed our chief customers were the squatters, who banked largely with us, and Allan Fraser was a younger son of one of the most important of these, a man whose "runs" were as big as an English county, and who counted his cattle by thousands and his sheep by tens of thousands.

Perhaps that was partly why his son was such a favourite with the principals of our firm, for old Fraser had saved our credit, and perhaps even our very existence, more than once, in hours of commercial panic, by depositing forty or fifty thousand pounds with us, and letting the little world of Melbourne know it whilst the myriad minnows of that little world were contemplating a rush to withdraw their paltry hundreds.

He had a very large family, however, and all sons, so it was not likely that Allan, the youngest of them, would be a rich man by *inheritance*. He would have to strike out for himself, and every one said he'd do it.

About this time the up-country districts were very much disturbed by bushrangers, who, on account of their lonely situations, levied blackmail at the squatters' houses (or stations as we call them), with considerable success, and very little peril. Sometimes they worked singly, and at others went abroad in gangs, but in either case the work was done thoroughly, and the slightest resistance to their demands meant a bullet through the brain; whilst if they were not exactly pleased with the supper given them, they would more likely than not burn down their entertainer's house for the slight.

With such gentry roaming the country at large, and the mounted police making little or no head against them, but getting pounced upon and murdered every

now and then at their camp-fires instead, it is not surprising that the squatters began to think it imprudent to keep valuables in their houses, especially when the nearest neighbour lived very likely twenty miles away, and their station hands and helps were perhaps many of them as great rascals as the bushrangers, whose jackals they not unfrequently were.

Thus it was that a great many of them came down to Melbourne to place anything they particularly valued in our keeping, and in a couple of months our strong-room held what would have stocked a jeweller's and a goldsmith's shop in a very creditable manner.

Our chief treasure, however, was yet to arrive, though it wasn't long before it made its appearance.

I was with my father in his private room one day, when an old Indian officer, called Montague, who had turned his sword into a ploughshare, and now owned a neat little property out Mount Macedon way, was ushered into the apartment, and at once proceeded to state his business.

He had brought a diamond which he wished us to take charge of for him, a diamond that he believed was worth fifty thousand pounds, and which he had scooped with his sword-point out of an idol's head at the sack of Delhi, during the bloody Sepoy mutiny. It had, in fact, been the idol's eye, its solitary eye, set in the middle of its forehead, and he had no notion that those bushrangers should rob him of it, he said.

It was certainly a very large, brilliant, and beautiful gem, and, moreover, of the exact shape of an eye. My father, in whose hands it had been placed, gazed at it half admiringly and half deprecatingly, and the latter

feeling was doubtless caused by its representing so much unproductive capital.

"Fifty thousand pounds! why, my dear sir, such a sum, properly invested, should bring you in an extra two thousand five hundred a year."

"Ah, yes," replied Major Montague reflectively, "perhaps so. But there's no one out here who would give me anything like the real value of the gem. I must wait until I can afford a holiday to Europe. Cornelius Van Huyt of Rotterdam is, I hear, the only man in the world who would appraise that diamond aright, and pay me what it is actually worth. He is the premier diamond merchant of the universe is Van Huyt."

My father smiled at the Major's somewhat grandiloquent manner of describing the Dutch dealer in precious stones, but the next instant that smile changed into a frown as he discovered Jock Ogilvie standing at his elbow, and it struck him that he had entered the room without knocking.

Jock glanced at the diamond, and then at my father's face, and seemed immediately to understand the full meaning of his contracted brow, for he coloured up, became confused, handed him the bundle of papers he had brought in from the bank, and then, whilst awaiting an answer, nervously whisked out his handkerchief and began polishing his nose therewith, evidently scarcely conscious as to whether he was standing on his head or his heels.

But the whisking out of his pocket-handkerchief had also the effect of jerking from out the breast-pocket of his jacket a small piece of cardboard, which fell on the carpet at his feet.

My father was the first one to perceive its presence there, and its face being upwards he knew what it was.

His expression of countenance, as he informed Jock Ogilvie that he had "dropped something," was very similar to that of a man on whom the conviction has just loomed that he has swallowed a slug amongst a mouthful of spring lettuce. So Jock picked up the pawn-ticket, whilst feeling a hundred per cent. more confused and embarrassed than he had done before, and darted out of the bank parlour the instant that he was afforded the opportunity of doing so, much as a nervous female would run out of a burning house.

"A very strange young man," remarked the Major dryly.

"Very strange indeed, and has quite mistaken his vocation," replied my father, and then proceeded as quickly as possible to change the subject.

Their opinions of Jock Ogilvie much annoyed me, for I felt somehow or other that he did not deserve them. True, he had nothing to recommend him but a merry nature and a good heart, but these are just the qualities that impress the young, and they had thoroughly impressed me. I knew that Jock would any day risk his life to save even a drowning dog, and that he had just as probably pawned his watch in order to relieve some case of distress that had suddenly excited his compassion, as to obtain the means for an indulgence in some extravagance which he found irresistible.

This was why, at a late hour of the day, I sought him out at his mother's house, and attempted in my own poor way to "minister to a mind diseased." I did my best, but somehow or other I signally failed.

"It's no good, Tom; 'tis a case of give a dog a bad name, and you may as well hang him at once. Don't you think I know what flashed into your father's mind when he discovered me at his elbow, looking at that big diamond which he held in his hand?—why, it was that I and that diamond had better be kept as far apart as possible lest I should steal it. I read his suspicions, and longed to knock him down for entertaining them. I might have done it but for his grey hairs, and the fact that he was your father. Then that pawn-ticket showing up as it did just settled the business."

"I'd just as soon bet that the pawn-ticket was creditable to you as the other way," I said awkwardly.

"Oh, I don't know. But for my improvident habits I suppose I should have had enough spare cash in my pocket for the poor woman's necessities. She said she was starving, and her two little ones as well, and I'm sure they looked it. Fraser, I presume, would have given her a tract and have told her what a blessed thing it was to be poor; but I just ran into a shop and pawned my watch, and gave 'em all that I had raised on it."

"I'm not surprised, 'twas just like you, and I'll take care that you are set right with the governor," I said.

But thereat Jock Ogilvie grew more angry than I had ever seen him before, and retorted excitedly—

"If you do anything of the kind I'll never speak to you again. I'm not called upon to justify myself for anything that I do to your father, though he is the head of the firm, and I'll be hanged before I'll do it, or suffer any one else to do it for me either. He was quite right in saying that I had mistaken my vocation, however. I feel it so myself. I have long felt it. But

that can be mended, and shall be mended before the world's much older."

Having thus delivered himself Jock puffed away furiously at his pipe, and I presently took my leave, trusting and believing that I should find him in a more rational frame of mind on the morrow.

But when the morrow came Jock Ogilvie was not to be found at all, and neither was the big diamond, whilst my father at once jumped to the conclusion that they had gone off in company.

The excitement at the bank was something tremendous, but it was suppressed excitement, for though all three heads of the firm thought that Jock Ogilvie had decamped with the big jewel, every one felt for his widowed mother, who was poor and proud, and a great invalid as well, and whom it was believed the news would kill if it were told her suddenly. Then, on the other hand, Major Montague's heart had been seriously affected for years, and the doctor had declared concerning him that any sudden shock might prove instantly fatal; whilst last of all there was our own credit to be maintained, and anything like a panic to be avoided.

Nevertheless the strictest investigations were carried on in the bank parlour, and the following were the brief facts that we derived therefrom. Allan Fraser had locked up the strong-room in which the big diamond had been put away at five minutes after four p.m., as it had been his daily duty to do for some years, and had handed the key to my father, the senior partner, on his leaving the bank, with the assurance that everything was right and tight, but couched in more formal words.

Fraser had been appointed to this duty not only on account of his steadiness and probity, but because he had an old head on young shoulders, and would be sure never to forget to test the door after he had secured it.

On the present occasion he was quite sure that he had done so, and that it had been tightly locked when he had left it.

But there were evidences enough to show that the case had been one of burglary, for in the narrow passage that led up to the door there were droppings of candle-grease, a burnt-out vesuvian cigar-light, and a short piece of lead pencil, with *J. Ogilvie* written near the head in black ink.

This last discovery, taken in conjunction with Jock's sudden flitting, at once stamped him as the thief in nearly everybody's mind; and when it was ascertained that the bank had been entered by way of a little basement window at the back, which was still open, and that a sharp iron catch pertaining thereto had torn off a fragment of broad-cloth that was unmistakably from the burglar's trousers, everybody present was ready to aver that Jock Ogilvie was the possessor of just such a pepper-and-salt coloured suit.

"Well, Master Tom," said my father to me that evening, "what do you think of Jock Ogilvie now?"

"I think the same of him as I did yesterday, and I'll never believe that he had a hand in the robbery."

"I'm afraid your sentiments spring from mere obstinacy of disposition, Tom. At all events no one will share them. Even Allan Fraser, who is the last to think ill of any one, believes Ogilvie to be guilty."

"Allan Fraser is a wolf in sheep's clothing, father, or

he wouldn't decry dancing in a social gathering of friends, and yet go to a masked ball at the *Casino de Venise*, and come away at four in the morning."

"And who saw him coming out of that vile place at four o'clock in the morning? I won't believe it."

"Well," I rejoined, "I'm quite sure that *I* saw him myself. It was the night that you had that sudden illness, when I ran up Great Burke Street to summon Doctor L. L. Smith. The masquers were just turning out of the casino, and I stopped for a moment to look at them. Suddenly a vizard dropped from one of their faces, and I saw that the wearer was Allan Fraser, dressed as a Chinese mandarin. Oh, there was no mistake in the matter I do assure you, father."

"Could you *swear* that it was Allan Fraser?" asked my parent sharply.

"No, not quite that; but I'd bet very long odds on its having been him."

My reply did not please my father. I ought to have known that it would not, any language connected with the turf being hateful to him. My story was consequently disbelieved, and I was in disgrace for a whole week.

CHAPTER II.

I RESOLVE TO RECOVER THE IDOL'S EYE, THOUGH I
FOLLOW IT AROUND THE WORLD.

DURING the week no intelligence whatever had been gathered as to the whereabouts of Jock Ogilvie. He had left his home on the night of the supposed diamond robbery, and had written the following farewell to his mother and pinned it on to his toilet-table cover, where she found it the following morning—

"I thirst for a more manly life than sitting on a high stool totting up interminable rows of figures, and I am off to seek it. I feel assured that I shall find better health, better fortune, and less temptation away from Melbourne."

There was an affectionate enough commencement and conclusion to this laconic epistle. I've given the gist of it, and 'twas not calculated to establish Jock Ogilvie's innocence, rather indeed the other way.

Meanwhile the bank proprietors had written to private detectives in every important town of Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand, to keep a sharp look-out for the absconder, for it had been discovered by this time that he hadn't sailed for Europe, on which account we had strong hopes of being able to recover the diamond without its leaking out that it had ever quitted our possession. Government detectives we were debarred from employing, because *they* dared not have compromised a felony.

The men we did employ exerted themselves in vain;

Jock Ogilvie and the big diamond seemed to have vanished as wholly and as effectually as though the earth had suddenly opened and swallowed them up.

'Twas wonderful that the secret was preserved so well as it was amongst a lot of giddy young fellows like us bank clerks; but the fact was, we were all very fond of Jock Ogilvie, and hoped that by keeping the matter quiet the diamond would be recovered without his entire future being blasted, as it assuredly would be if the story got wind.

This alone will show that almost every one by this time thought Jock guilty, and Allan Fraser never lost an opportunity of "improving the occasion" by delivering little whispered homilies about the inevitable evil results of attending racecourses, of card-playing, dancing, smoking in the morning, and so forth.

I do not for a moment say that all that he advocated wasn't quite right, or that everything that he deprecated wasn't equally wrong. If I could have looked at Allan Fraser through the same rose-coloured spectacles that my father did I should have venerated him. I didn't of course dislike him for being *good*, but because I had the strongest inward conviction that he was a humbug and hypocrite. I just as firmly believed that he had stolen the diamond himself, and was keeping it carefully secreted.

I had heard Jock Ogilvie telling him the whole story about the Idol's Eye, in a quiet corner of the bank, within half-an-hour of the gem being deposited with us, together with what it was supposed to be worth, and the name of the Rotterdam diamond merchant who alone of all men in the world would give an adequate remuneration for it. And I had been very much struck

by the circumstance that Fraser had, in a roundabout manner, induced Jack to repeat the Dutchman's name, for what possible motive could *he* have had for wishing to fix that name in his memory ?

I thought, however, that I saw a motive when, after the lapse of a month, my father told us all one day at dinner that Allan Fraser, with his parents' consent and approval, was going to take a voyage to Europe in order to expand his mind, &c.

"I wish *I* could take a voyage to Europe to expand *mine*," I at once made answer. "It's a very old promise now that I should one day visit the old country and grandfather Collins. You know how often he's invited me."

All this was true enough, yet for all that I wasn't quite prepared for my mother saying to my father—

"Why shouldn't Tom go to England with Allan Fraser ? Such an opportunity may not occur again."

Though I was a strapping lad of eighteen, my mother still regarded me as a perfect child.

"Oh," rejoined my father with a laugh, "I always thought you were afraid of his getting drowned on the way."

"I shouldn't be afraid of anything happening to him in the company of Allan Fraser," answered my mother enthusiastically. "My mind would be quite at rest if I knew that he was under the charge of that estimable and exemplary young man, and I'm sure he would willingly undertake it if you were to ask him, George."

I saw that to say a word against Fraser after this would be to baffle and defeat my own designs. It was annoying, for I always hated a hypocrite, and yet I had apparently now to become one or to lose the game ; so

when my father turned round and asked me if I would like Allan Fraser for a travelling companion, I answered that "I would like him exceedingly for one," which was certainly true enough in one sense.

Both my father and mother seemed to be very pleased with this speech of mine, and the next morning my father said to Fraser in my presence—

"My lad wants to go to Europe, that is to say as far as England, with you, Allan; and as I've long promised his grandfather he shall pay him a visit (for the old man has no other grandson, and seems to think a good deal of this one), I dare say you won't object to him for a travelling companion."

"Delighted, I'm sure, Mr. Collins," answered Fraser, none too heartily though, and speaking, I thought, as if a lump had suddenly risen in his throat. At the same time he darted a piercing glance at me as though desirous of reading my inmost thoughts. I don't think he succeeded in plunging very deep into them, however.

I wasn't going to let him back out of his promise, the reader may be sure, though he made several attempts to throw obstacles in the way of my accompanying him. Even my father perceived *this* before very long, and I could see well enough was grieved and puzzled by it, which was doubtless why he said to me one day—

"You must endeavour, Tom, to make yourself a more fitting companion for Allan Fraser. I am sure he fears that you won't pull very well together during this voyage, and that he will find you more of an embarrassment than a comfort. I look to you to undeceive him, lad, so try to leave some of your frivolity and gawkishness behind you."

I promised that I would, and I furthermore intended

to do it, for I had by this time fully made up my mind that ere my return to Australia I would succeed in vindicating Jock Ogilvie's character by proving Allan Fraser to be the purloiner of Major Montague's big diamond, the celebrated Idol's Eye.

"By the bye," I said to my father the very day before I sailed, "if that diamond doesn't turn up, what do the firm intend to do in the matter? I suppose the Major will hold us responsible?"

"Legally, and for want of what is called a consideration, I believe that he cannot, Tom; but practically we intend to press upon his acceptance the value that he himself set upon the gem, or rather the amount which he declared the Rotterdam jewel merchant would have given for it. Fifty thousand pounds is a large sum, but it won't break the bank, and as he has suffered through our dishonest servant, we consider him to be equitably entitled to that sum."

I said no more, for I knew from the conclusion of his speech that my father still firmly believed that Jock Ogilvie was the thief, and it was not the time to re-iterate my own conviction that Allan Fraser was the guilty party. Won't he be surprised when I bring the diamond back with me? I thought to myself.

At ten o'clock the next morning I was on board the thousand ton ship, *Promised Land*, that lay alongside the railway pier at Sandridge, with a Blue Peter fluttering at her fore, and "homeward bound," for most Australians still called England home in those days, and regarded it as such also.

Fraser was already on board, and received me very cordially, evidently at last resolved to make the best of a bad bargain. Doubtless he had also succeeded in

convincing himself that he hadn't much to fear from a raw lad like me, *especially as I went no further than London with him.*

There were only five other passengers besides ourselves, for the *Promised Land* was more a cargo than a passenger boat, though beautifully fitted up as regarded her cabins, and having a flush deck from stem to stern, so that she had almost a yacht-like appearance. She had been Allan Fraser's special choice, and his reason for selecting her had been, that in case of fire or shipwreck there was more chance of being saved than in a crowded passenger ship, where there is generally a panic and a rush for boats, with the result of swamping them with numbers, &c.

I was to have shared Fraser's cabin, which was a double one, but found that he had filled the lower berth with his own belongings, and persuaded the captain to give me another all to myself, alleging that there was plenty of room, and it would be so much more comfortable for both parties. This was true enough, and yet I resented in secret the extra accommodation, for it would prevent my keeping so close a watch upon my gentleman as I had intended to do.

An hour later we were standing down the noble expanse of water called Hobson's Bay, and the setting sun saw us gliding through the extremely narrow channel that forms its mouth into Bass's Straits, whose turbulent waves formed a very unpleasant contrast at first to the inland sea that we had for hours been traversing on an even keel, and soon sent us all below, the majority of us to wish that the voyage was either over or had never begun, and to wonder if our brains and stomachs hadn't somehow got mixed.

I thought very little about Fraser or the big diamond for the next two or three days, but I was up and about a good twenty-four hours before Allan put in an appearance, having found that nibbling a hard ship's biscuit sprinkled with a little salt was a capital thing wherewith to get the better of sea-sickness.

We were by that time clear of the Straits, and of the great island of Tasmania as well, but were still steering south in order to get below the latitude of Cape Horn, the extreme projecting point of South America, which we had eventually to round, in order to exchange the Pacific Ocean for the Atlantic.

It was colder than ever I had experienced it in my life, but when I told the captain this he laughed at me, and said—

“Wait for another five or six days, and you'll look back on this as delightful summer, for by then the sails may be frozen; and there will be ice enough on the deck to slide on.”

I'd never seen ice, and I didn't feel as if I wanted to do so either; in fact I lost all interest in the voyage until Allan Fraser turned up again, looking very watery about the eyes and green about the gills, but the sight of his abject misery seemed to fill me with new life, and I began to keenly enjoy it as well.

But another day or two gave even Allan his sea-legs and a return of appetite, and then, as the sea had ceased to bother him, I tried what I could do, and I think that on the whole I fairly succeeded.

Fraser made no friends among the passengers, and it was very evident to me that it was his fault, and not theirs. He held aloof from every one, and shunned taking part in even ordinary conversation when it could

be avoided. He would have had just as little to say to me had I given in to his whim, but I did not.

I became a rankling thorn in his side, and never reflected there could be any possible danger in thus amusing myself, for the more I pricked him the more amiable it seemed to make him. Once I said to him when we were alone—

“What fun we could have in Europe if we’d fifty thousand pounds to spend between us.”

Fraser started as a horse starts at an unexpected application of the spur, and asked almost pantingly—

“What makes you say *fifty* thousand pounds, Tom Collins, when in all probability no two fellows of our ages ever had such a prodigious sum to spend between them?”

“Oh,” I responded, with a laugh, “I was thinking of Major Montague’s diamond, which he declared to be worth that amount, and of how much more enjoyment its equivalent in gold would give a fellow than its mere possession.”

On another occasion I said to him—

“You are going to make the tour of Europe the pater told me; of course if you do so you’ll see some very remarkable places. Do you mean to take Rotterdam in your route?”

This question seemed to touch him on the raw, and he answered it with another—

“What is there worth seeing in Rotterdam?—its canals?”

“Yes, it is remarkable for its canals, and also for its diamond merchants,” I responded in a careless manner, but eyeing him keenly the while.

Then it was that for the first time in my life I saw him give way to anger.

"Hang the diamond merchants! You talk as though you thought that I had stolen the Idol's Eye, and was proceeding to Europe, and—and—and to Rotterdam, on purpose to dispose of it," he muttered fiercely; when, perceiving that I had gone too far, I pretended indignation in turn, and said—

"Do you think that I should be travelling with you as your friend and companion if I thought you were a common thief?"

This seemed to pacify him and to quiet his suspicions, and I saw at last that I should be a fool to stir them up again, for that it might tend to make his detection in the end all the more difficult.

I still felt quite convinced that he had the diamond with him, but how and where could he be carrying it? Had I but shared his cabin, as it had been arranged that I was to do, I should soon have discovered all about it, I flattered myself; but as it was, Allan Fraser kept his state-room door locked both day and night.

It was not long, however, before I noticed that he had taken to wearing an old-fashioned silver watch, a regular "turnip," such as might have adorned his great-grandfather's fob. No sooner had I done so than I kept asking him the time by it, and though he always pulled it forth and told me, his screening the face with his hand the while tempted me to get a peep at it by hook or by crook every now and then, and I don't think I was much surprised to discover that the hands were always fixed exactly in the same positions. Almost simultaneously with finding this out I came to the

conclusion that the turnip-watch contained the stolen diamond.

Yes, as I regarded the size and the *thickness* of the ancient timepiece, I felt sure, *with all the works taken out of it*, the case would just hold the Idol's Eye, though with not much space to spare.

Some few nights after I had got this notion or rather conviction into my head, I was leaning over the taffrail, gazing at the luminous water as it sparkled and hissed in the vessel's wake, when Fraser walked up to me with an open book in his hand.

"The sea gives out enough phosphorus to read by," he said, leaning over the stern and holding the book aslant.

"Does it indeed? Hardly I should say," came from my lips in turn, as I changed my position to get a sight of the open book.

"Here, hold hard, old fellow, or you'll over-balance yourself!" cried Fraser the next instant, in an unnecessarily loud voice, at the same time laying both hands on me and dropping his book overboard.

But I had not been in the slightest danger of over-balancing myself, and I felt that he was doing his best to heave me overboard instead of to pull me back, though the instant he guessed that I was too strong for him to be able to effect his object, he abandoned it and threw me instead down upon the deck, exclaiming as he did so—

"There, Master Tom, I've saved your life this time, so just try and take better care of yourself in future, for your mother's sake if not for your own."

CHAPTER III.

A GALE IN THE GREAT SOUTHERN OCEAN, AND THE
SOMETHING WORSE THAT FOLLOWED.

It was certainly very strange, but after I recovered my presence of mind, I could not have sworn positively that Allan Fraser had attempted to destroy me. I was aware that I had leaned over the taffrail a good way, and he might after all have fancied that I was in danger, and acted accordingly, heaving me forward somewhat in order to get a better grip of me. Terror and excitement might have caused all the rest.

But although I confessed to myself that all this was possible, I never for a single instant imagined it to be probable, and my belief that Allan Fraser had attempted my life was not shaken. Under such circumstances it was insufferable to hear Allan continually being praised and congratulated for the good deed he had done, and to find myself compelled either to echo such sentiments or to be set down as an ungrateful brute, whom it would have been almost as well to have allowed to drown.

One good thing that the incident taught me was to be cautious, and of the folly of waving a red flag before a bull's face when there is nothing between oneself and the beast's horns. It was a lesson worth learning.

Well, we weren't long now in getting down into the very cold latitudes, those dreary regions where there is

a clean sweep of sea all round the world, with never so much as an island or even a rock to check its course, and where the wind blows almost continually from the west, hurling the huge billows eastward like watery mountains, and carrying the great ships along in their course as though they were mere bubbles or corks.

Night and day two men were stationed at the wheel, and the days were but six hours long and the nights eighteen. Very little canvas dared the struggling vessel show to such winds as now blew, yet they urged her along at such a rate that she often made a run of three hundred miles in the twenty-four hours.

But oh, the dreariness and the horror of those times, with their grey skies and their greyer seas, the cold—the damp—the utter blankness and desolation. The longing gaze dwelt day after day and week after week upon an ocean without a ship, a sky without a sun; on decks that the waves tore over like bounding horses; on bulwarks riven and rent like matchwood, with yawning fissures here and there; on life-lines stretched from stem to stern, and on yellow oilskin-clad, sou'wester-hatted sailors clinging to them as they went about their duties.

Then at times the hatches were battened down as well, and we passengers were half suffocated in the nearly dark saloon, which the fog would somehow or other manage to penetrate and fill, though ozone couldn't; and there we would sit with nothing else to do but gaze into each other's faces, whilst the billows would buffet and boom against our fragile craft till she would seem to shudder and shiver like some living thing in mortal agony, and the water would leak in between her straining timbers and saturate our beds and bedding through and through.

I thought that the worst had surely come then, but I was grievously mistaken, for a gale arose which lasted three days and nights, and compared with which all that had gone before was less than nothing. Battening of hatches was no good then. The sea forced its way through everything, and washed down the companion ladder into the saloon, where it was soon playing a game of leap-frog across the dining-table. It invaded the state-rooms, swamped the lower berths, and splashed up into the higher ones, in which we poor wretches lay to avoid being drenched and perhaps drowned.

Meanwhile the wind shrieked and the ocean roared and moaned so that we could not hear each other's voices, and all the light which we received was from the luminosity of the invading waters, and that was a most ghastly light indeed.

Now and then the captain would come down the ladder, and wade thigh-deep through the flood to get at a certain cupboard and a certain brandy-bottle, and sometimes he would yell through his great copper speaking-trumpet, for the general benefit, ere he returned to the deck, some such words of comfort as "She holds together yet," or "Still afloat, my hearties," but for a long while nothing more encouraging.

At last, however, when things appeared to us to have reached the hopeless stage, and Allan Fraser was praying aloud, but in so agonized a manner that it struck me, as I lay just at his elbow with my ear almost touching his lips, that no really good young man could have had so intense a fear of death as he evidently entertained, the captain came down yet again, and on this occasion bellowed out cheerily—

"The worst is about over, for the barometer's rising.

I guess the gale will have blown itself out before eight bells."

And it had blown itself out by then, and some three hours later we were all allowed to go on deck, with strict injunctions, however, to hold on by the life-lines, though I imagine that even the very bravest of us would have done so without the advice, for it was a truly fearful scene that we gazed on, as such a sea I never had beheld even in pictures; but then artists don't often go so far as the great Southern Ocean for their subjects, compared with which Biscay's Bay, even in its most perturbed state, is but a mill-pond.

A double-reefed fore-sail and a storm stay-sail was all in the way of canvas that the ship dared show, and now that the force of the gale had moderated she pitched more desperately than she had done when the storm was at its height, at one moment thrusting her bows right under until even her capstan had disappeared, and the next rising like a rearing horse and casting tons of slimy green water on to her main deck, which would rush out through the huge gaps that fortunately had been rent in her bulwarks.

Three men were lashed to the wheel, and could just manage to control it. Had it overpowered them but for an instant the ship would have been whirled round and turned broadside on to the eastward rushing waves, which would have overwhelmed and sunk her in the twinkling of an eye. The rest of the watch on deck were clinging here and there to ropes and shrouds as limpets might cling to rocks, tightening their grasp and holding their breath as first one huge wave and then another rose high in the air, and threatened to break on board and sweep away all before it.

Sometimes we would be lifted up on the back of some mighty roller and carried along with wonderful velocity, and on one of these occasions we saw, at what seemed no great distance, an iceberg gleaming vast and spectral between leaden-hued sea and pall-like sky. It was of great height, and rose sheer out of the water, but we were only vouchsafed a moment's sight of it, for the next we were sliding down into a deep ocean valley again, till the shiny, shimmery water rose on all sides of us higher than either of our mast-heads.

It was at this juncture that a cry was raised by one of the men at the wheel of "Hold on! Hold on for your lives!" and with one exception we followed the advice, without first endeavouring to ascertain why it was given. That exception was Allan Fraser. He looked round ere he tightened his grasp upon the life-line, and the consequence was, that whilst the rest of us were merely carried off our feet and then dashed down on to the deck, he was swept away into the lee scuppers, but not, as we all thought at the time, carried overboard.

A trifle further forward he would have gone out through a vast fissure which had been torn in the bulwarks, but, as it was, he had been dashed against woodwork that was intact, and instantly gripped something which kept him afloat in about a yard's depth of hissing, swirling, gurgling water. He, however, evidently thought himself in dire extremity, for he shrieked for succour, and a couple of us somehow or other managed to rescue him, help him up the sloping deck, and close his hands around the life-line, which we told him not to let go of again as he valued his existence.

Instinct, however, was stronger than fear, and hardly

had the words of advice escaped our lips when his left hand had quitted its hold on the rope, to be thrust deep into his waistcoat pocket, the pocket that held the turnip watch.

It lingered there but an instant, and then was withdrawn to clutch at the rope again, but the expression of thankfulness, almost indeed of ecstatic joy, that passed over Allan Fraser's face was a strange sight to behold as he unconsciously murmured in perfectly audible tones—

“Safe—safe—quite safe!”

“Why, you seem to be more thankful on your watch's account than you are on your own,” I could not help exclaiming; indeed I could hardly resist the temptation of tearing it out of his pocket by force, and solving the question as to its contents then and there before them all. Had it been safe to let go of the life-rope for a single instant I verily believe that I should have done so. As it was, however, I resolved that by hook or by crook the watch should change hands very shortly, at all events for a brief while.

Well, very soon all of us had had quite enough of the wave-swept deck, and were glad enough to return to the saloon, wherein the water was now not much higher than our ankles, and in places was already covered with a thin layer of ice, so that we were thankful to climb into our bunks.

The worst was, however, over, that is to say for the time, and in another twenty-four hours the place had dried up, and the angry seas no longer swept our decks, so the cook was able to light his galley fire once more, and produce hot coffee and cooked food, which had been strangers to us for days.

Then as the weather got better and better we all of us began to enjoy the deck again, and to watch the carpenter and his mates repairing the shattered and riven bulwarks, the men up aloft bending fresh sails to replace those which the wind had shred to ribbons or else carried bodily away like great fluttering white birds. And talking of birds, our attention was now caught and fascinated by the huge albatrosses that swept over the surface of the sea for miles and miles without a single flutter of their enormous pinions, and the scores and sometimes hundreds of little birds closely resembling pigeons which sometimes floated like ducks all around the ship, and accompanied her on her course.

For the albatrosses we used to fish, baiting a sharp hook with a lump of pork and floating it with a cork. Now and then the lure was successful, pork and hook were bolted together, and the united strength of half-a-dozen of us would succeed in hauling one of the great birds aboard. Their bodies were as big as the largest swans, and their wings when expanded would sometimes measure as much as fifteen feet from tip to tip. But the sailors no more liked this diversion of ours than did those who voyaged with the Ancient Mariner, and not a few of them declared that evil would come of it before long.

Allan Fraser took no part in this what he called "most cruel sport," and seemed to be lost in an almost perpetual reverie. I thought to myself, whenever I caught him smiling, and with a far-away look in his eyes, that he was pondering upon what enjoyments he'd get out of the fifty thousand pounds that the stolen diamond would produce; and whenever this notion occurred to me, I'm sorry to say I experienced a difficulty

in curbing mental ejaculations that would have been highly improper, for he no longer wore his old turnip watch. He had evidently secreted it somewhere, and as he always kept his cabin door locked, and doubtless the box or trunk which contained it as well, all chance of my being able to get at it seemed to be past.

I could think of nothing but my disappointment, that is to say for a considerable while.

The weather was now tolerably fair for such a latitude, but both sky and sea continued grey, and the cold was intense, the decks being sometimes covered with ice, and the ropes and yards also. All that our captain cared very little concerning, but about the non-appearance for days and nights together of sun, moon, and stars he evidently did care a great deal, for without one or other of them he could not take observations with his sextant to discover where we exactly were, and so had to depend on what they call *dead reckoning*, which is a very unsatisfactory method at the best, though Captain Miller thought himself a dab at it.

Had he not done so he would assuredly not have said to us so confidently and cheerily one Sunday after church service in the saloon—

"Well, gentlemen, we shall change oceans during the day or the night, and to-morrow morning at breakfast I shall be able to congratulate you on being in the South Atlantic instead of the South Pacific."

Hardly, however, had the words quitted his lips when there came a yell rather than a hail from the deck of—"Breakers on the port bow," followed after only a second's pause by—"Land on the port bow," in still shriller accents.

"Nonsense! A fog bank or a school of whales. It

can't be anything more!" exclaimed the captain; but for all that he looked like a man who had suddenly clapped eyes on a ghost, and he rushed towards the companion ladder in such a hurry that he sent Allan Fraser, who was inadvertently standing in the way, spinning across the saloon. When he had disappeared we all stood staring at each other, scarcely knowing what to think, and still less what to do, yet feeling vaguely that something terrible was at hand.

Another minute or two, and a sudden shock threw us in all directions; and as we lay struggling on the floor of the saloon we heard a horrid scrunching, rending sound, and knew instinctively that the ship was on the rocks.

How we got on deck I can hardly tell. I know there was a struggle, each striving to be first. But there were only seven of us, so the crush was not a great one, and in a couple of minutes we all knew the worst, and in addition that much worse there could not be, for we were hard and fast aground, and at less than a quarter of a mile's distance lay a black beach upon which a tremendous sea was rolling, and black cliffs rising up therefrom in awful and rugged majesty almost to the very sky.

"Good God, it's the Horn!" Captain Miller exclaimed as he passed close by us, wringing his hands. "I've run too far north. I've made a slip between two oceans. We are all lost souls! We are all lost souls!"

He seemed to have lost his head, and it was the first mate who called out from forward—

"Lower away the boats. She's going to pieces already. There's a hole in her bows big enough for a whale to come in at, and she's fixed as firm as the

rock o' Gibraltar. Lower away, and look slippery at it, lads."

There was no need for this last piece of advice, for every one sprang to the davits, though there seemed small chance indeed of a ship's boat living in such a sea ; but they were the straws at which drowning men clutch, and we all assisted at the lowering of them—all at least save Allan Fraser. He had gone below again, and I could easily guess what he had gone for.

Not that I felt much interest at a crisis like the present either in the silver turnip watch or in what I believed it to contain. Dear life was at stake, for the *Promised Land* was falling to pieces before the united force of wind and waves, as a house built of cards falls to pieces before the breath of a child. Her planks were already starting in all directions, and her fore and main-masts had fallen into the boiling sea.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SLIP BETWEEN TWO OCEANS.—CAST AWAY ON CAPE HORN.

THE fall of the two masts, in company with their huge spars and wilderness of ropes and blocks, had killed several of the crew and stove in one of the boats ; but the others were quickly lowered and filled, though one turned bottom upwards almost immediately, and sunk to the bottom as though she had been built of lead instead of wood.

I was unaware of either of these catastrophes for a

little while, because I had rushed to the head of the saloon hatchway, to shout down the companion to Fraser that he would be left behind if he didn't hurry, for I only remembered him as a fellow-creature and an old acquaintance now, and I didn't want to see him lose his life.

"Oh dear! oh dear! Where is it? I'm a fool, a forgetful fool," I could hear him raving like an excited and furious madman.

But at my third yell he appeared, and came stumbling up the ladder, thrusting something into his trousers pocket. That smile of satisfied greed exasperated me, and I said to him, for he had been risking *my* life as well as his own—

"You fool, what do you mean by it? Are diamonds worth more than dust at a moment like this? If we ever gain the shore, it is only an uninhabited island."

He made no answer, he ceased to smile, his teeth were chattering in his head with terror.

I glanced around the decks. They were deserted. I rushed to the vessel's side, and discovered with a thrill of horror and despair that every boat had quitted it, though I could only see one of them still afloat, and as I gazed longingly after *her* a great wave seemed to tip her up by the stern and cause her to execute a complete somersault, her occupants being swept out of her as she turned over, and instantly engulfed.

At the same time I heard a noise of a mighty explosion, accompanied by a crashing and crackling sound. The deck whereon I stood seemed to be soaring into the air. I lost my footing, fell, felt myself sliding, and clutched with both hands at a ring-bolt. I remember nothing more until I recovered consciousness, and

found myself still clutching a ring-bolt, and still lying upon the water-soaked planking, but motionless and still, as I had never been for a single instant since the *Promised Land* had sailed out of Hobson's Bay.

Such an incident alone was sufficient to make me stare around in not altogether unpleasant surprise, and then I saw that some twelve feet square of the wreck's deck lay upon the black beach, that the sea had receded several hundred yards therefrom, and that Allan Fraser was curled up in a crouching attitude near by, and looking, at least so I thought, half stupid and half dangerous.

"Allan," said I, "don't stare at me like that. If I have guessed your secret I can't injure you here. We are on an uninhabited island. We alone are saved from the wreck. We are two miserable Crusoes."

"No, no," retorted my companion; "don't you think I know more than *that* about Cape Horn? I tell you it is the southern point of the great island of Tierra del Fuego, and that there are Christianized natives and mission-stations here. You know too much, Tom Collins, and I must kill you. Oh, God! how I wish that I could spare you, but I *daren't* do it."

He may not have been quite sane when he made up his mind to murder me, but then it is just as unpleasant to be killed by a madman as by a rational one, and scrambling to my feet I retreated from him along the beach, shouting out as I did so—

"Cape Horn is in Hermite Island, which is of small size, and separated from Tierra del Fuego by a channel thirty miles in breadth. It is uninhabited, and the coast is so dangerous that vessels seldom if ever come near it. I can recollect that in my school geography."

I had no need to retreat any further, for Allan Fraser came to a sudden standstill, trembled, raised his clasped hands towards heaven, and then fell back on the black strand in a swoon. I felt that he was no longer dangerous.

I at once sat down by his side and endeavoured to bring him round—first, however, searching his pockets for dangerous weapons, for I still felt I would rather have such in my own possession.

I discovered a clasp-knife, and pocketed it. Having deprived him of that, he had nothing save his fists to oppose me with, and I felt pretty confident that my own would be a match for his. Strange to say, though his silver turnip watch positively rolled out of his waistcoat pocket into my hand whilst I was searching him for weapons, I had not sufficient curiosity to open it and find out what it really contained. The immediate preservation of existence was the only matter of any moment *now*, and I dared not hope that we would be able to manage that for long.

Where and how were we to obtain food, and where and how save ourselves from perishing from the bitter and biting cold, which already seemed to be freezing the marrow in my bones? I looked despairingly around me, first on the cold grey sea, studded with rocks and reefs as far as the gaze could range, and next at the cliffs, that looked as though they were composed of shiny Wallsend coal, and rose in some places so high that their summits were lost to view in the drifting cloud-rack.

All at once it struck me that when the tide came rushing in it would reach up to the base of those awful precipices, and that we should be both drowned and dashed to pulp against them.

With these thoughts driving me almost distracted, I was not sorry when Allan Fraser recovered from his swoon, which he did as gentle as a child. He begged me not to forsake him, called himself a miserable sinner who had met with his just reward, and then despairingly demanded what was to be done?

I don't remember how I answered him, but I do distinctly recollect with what despairing energy we looked for some way of scaling the black cliffs where their altitude was least tremendous, and how we at last found it practicable where a furious watercourse had, at some time or other, worn the glossy and slippery perpendicular into a mere ragged and steep incline, that almost resembled a flight of Titanic stairs.

It seemed to me that we were hours climbing up them, never once daring to look below us, lest we should turn giddy at contemplation of the horrid depth, and fall like meteoric stones through the air. At last, however, we got to the top, to discover a wide, hummocky, sandy plain, pierced here and there by ridges of black rock, but not a tree, a shrub, or so much as a tuft of coarse grass anywhere visible. This plain might have been a score of miles long and a dozen broad, less rather than more, and it evidently constituted the entire island, which was thus a kind of "Table Mountain," rising on all sides sheer upwards out of the water.

If it had been bitterly cold down below, what was it up here? Our teeth chattered in our heads, and we trembled so that we could hardly stand. The undulating surface of the sandy plain looked to us just like the grey ocean that we had been ploughing for six weeks, and the ridges of black rock closely resembled the backs and heads of whales wallowing therein. Along

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the edges of the cliffs, however, thousands and tens of thousands of sea-birds were perched, and they seemed to be regarding us curiously, but without the slightest vestige of fear, as though they imagined that we must have dropped out of the moon.

We were quite as much out of our element as though we had actually done so, perhaps a good deal more, for we were by this time convinced that we looked upon our entire realm, and that it did not contain sufficient to support our existence for four-and-twenty hours. As for the birds, it was not at all probable that they would hop up to our very feet and mutely invite us to wring their necks.

All at once Fraser said to me in horrified accents—

“The wind is rising, and I’ve an awful presentiment that if it begins to blow hard we shall be carried across this plain as though we were thistledown or feathers, and swept into the sea on the other side of it.”

Hardly had he uttered the words when I began to entertain the same belief, for we were above the very clouds, and who could tell what dreadful force the wind might attain to at such a height?

We went about searching for the shelter that we longed for, yet scarcely dared hope to find, as men wander in a nightmare; but presently we came to a circular hollow, wherein the sand seemed to have been baked into clay, or rather porcelain, and at the bottom was a round hole full of water, and what looked like the entrance to a cave just behind it.

This was a find indeed, and so we slid down the twenty feet or so declivity, and a minute or two later tenanted a cavern about as big as an ordinary gipsy’s tent, which to our surprise was as warm as though artificially heated

with hot air. More strange still, the water in the circular hole outside was boiling hot, and bubbled like a simmering cauldron, so that here we had the means of cooking, provided that we could only find something to cook, which it did not seem at all likely that we should.

However, we were at last warm, and that was all that we cared for yet awhile, for our fatigue now completely overpowered us, and we lay down and went to sleep as though we hadn't a single care or anxiety to worry ourselves over.

I was the first to wake up, and as it was broad daylight, and the sun just rising in the east, I calculated that I must have slept some twenty hours right off. Fraser was still snoring away lustily, and so I thought I would issue forth alone and make a little tour of exploration.

It proved a very much more profitable one than I had dared to hope for, since no sooner had I approached close to the edge of the cliffs, than I discovered, where the tens of thousands of birds had been perched the night before, almost as many nests of eggs. The nests seemed to be welded together of sand and feathers, with birdlime for cement, and some of the eggs were as large as a turkey's.

I returned with my pockets full of these, but I was destined to secure yet another prize on the way, for I met a stupid-looking bird who advanced to meet me without the slightest fear, and when he found that I wouldn't get out of his way began to peck at my legs. He was as big as and much more foolish than a goose, and I laid hold of him and wrung his neck, my mouth watering with hunger the while.

I found Allan Fraser awake and positively moaning with hunger. He had not yet troubled to look about

to discover whether I was in the cavern or no; when, therefore, he beheld me coming in at the entrance with the big dead bird in my grasp, his delight knew no bounds, and it was still increased upon the production of the eggs.

When I gave him one he bit a piece out of the shell and began to suck at the orifice greedily, nor was I loth to follow his example. By the time the shells were emptied our hunger was appeased.

We then plucked our bird and drew him, after which we immersed him in our well of boiling water, holding him by his legs until he was cooked. He tasted very strong of fish, but we didn't mind that.

Thirst, however, succeeded to hunger, and as we could not drink boiling water from our geyser spring, for, in point of fact, that was what the circular pool was, we began to wonder how we should manage to draw it and let it cool. It was a puzzle, for our caps were gone, and our clothing was porous. As to using our boots, the idea was altogether too unpalatable. Suddenly I bethought myself of my companion's watch, and said to him, having no thought of what it contained the while, for the biggest diamond was as valueless as a grain of sand to men circumstanced as we were—

"Your watch-case would hold half a wine-glass of water—quite enough to quench thirst."

"Won't *your* watch-case do?" he asked.

"No, it would not hold half a thimbleful," I rejoined, and then, as a fresh idea occurred to me, I added—"And besides, with a hole bored through the opposite rim I could run my chain through it, and the two chains together would make it a kind of sling or single scale, in which we could lower our eggs into the geyser to boil.

We can't do without your watch-case. A diamond of its size wouldn't be a quarter so precious."

Allan Fraser started and trembled at my last remark, and then he wailed out in most piteous accents—

"Oh, it is too, too true. God had taught me that lesson before it fell from your lips, Tom Collins. My sin has found me out, and terrible is my punishment—too, too terrible."

With this confession, which seemed to be positively wrung from him, Allan Fraser drew the turnip-watch from his pocket, opened it, and in an instant the gleam, as it seemed to me *then* the saturnine and malevolent gleam, of the Idol's Eye met mine, and I knew at last that my suspicions of Allan Fraser had all along been correct, and that Jock Ogilvie was *really* and altogether innocent of the diamond robbery.

"You don't look surprised at what you see, and I'm not astonished at it, for I've felt that you suspected me all along, and that in fact you were accompanying me to Europe as a spy of the bank. *That* was why I tried to heave you overboard that night. Yes, I've been a great sinner, a very great sinner, but whosoever confesseth his sins, God is faithful and just to forgive him his sins, and to cleanse him from all unrighteousness."

"Aye, but there must be deep sorrow and contrition in *addition* to confession, and also the firm resolve to make satisfaction for such sins, should the opportunity ever arise. That is the doctrine of the Catholic Church, at all events," I said.

"I am not a Romanist," said Fraser, as I thought somewhat sullenly, "but *my* Church bids the sinner to cast his temptation from him, and so——" Here he paused, plucked the Idol's Eye out of the watch-case,

and would have cast it into the geyser-spring, had I not seized hold of his arm and wrenched the gem out of his hand.

"Stop," I exclaimed excitedly, "the same Almighty Power that has in so remarkable a manner punished a sinner, may in just as wondrous a one vindicate the innocent from undeserved suspicion, and reinstate him in the good opinion of his fellow-men. Besides, the diamond is not yours to throw away, temptation or no temptation."

With these words I thrust it into one of my own pockets, resolved to guard it with my very life.

Allan Fraser shrugged his shoulders, sighed, and then said—

"Well, well, do with it what you like. We shall never get away from here, and so the thing is not worth quarrelling about. The old watch-case is thrice as valuable, so let us convert it into a cup and an egg-boiler in one, instead of any longer disputing over such a trifle."

It did not strike me at the time that this was by no means the manner in which a true penitent would behave, but, circumstanced as we were, I felt no disposition to censure Fraser, far less to quarrel with him. We were too dependent on each other to be anything but the best of friends, for I suspect that neither would have been deprived of the other's companionship for all the gold and diamonds in the world; and with the warm cavern to dwell in, a spring of boiling water at our front door, edible birds tame enough to run into our arms, and sufficient eggs along the cliff ledges to provision an army, we might manage to exist in that dreary region until we at last died of old age.

Such a fate was at all events more probable than that we should ever be rescued therefrom, for we both remembered now having read that ships seldom approached within three leagues of that awful promontory, which stretches so far out towards the South Pole, separating the waters of two vast oceans as though it was the arm of Omnipotence itself.

CHAPTER V.

TWO LONELY CRUSOES.—A FLIGHT THROUGH AIR.—THE SCHOONER.

WEEKS and months rolled by, yet we still lived, subsisting on birds and eggs. The former, though only one particular breed, persisted in walking up to us and pecking our legs whenever we took our walks abroad, and on an average one a day got into *hot water* through his impertinence. All this while we never expected that *we* should ere long get into hot water ourselves, yet so it happened.

One night Allan Fraser complained of the great heat and dampness of the cavern, and soon after it filled with a kind of steamy vapour, and we began to hear strange rumbling and gushing sounds underneath us. On looking out through the cave's mouth we beheld what at first looked like a ghost, for it was the height of a tall man, luminous and transparent, and whilst trembling and undulating gave vent to the strangest sounds.

But this apparently six-feet-high ghost quickly shot

up to twenty, fifty, eighty, a hundred feet, its head waving to and fro, and dropping scalding spray upon our upturned and pallid faces. At last we felt our feet scalding, and looking down discovered that we were standing in steaming water.

"Run! it is the geyser! The basin will be full and the cavern flooded in a few minutes. We must look lively if we don't want to be boiled alive," I said to my companion, and he wasn't slow to take the hint.

Up the smooth side of the twenty-feet-deep circular basin we climbed, with a scalding shower raining down on us all the way, and we did not realize that we were being flooded out of our only house and home until the flooding was an accomplished fact, and in lieu of being boiled we were half frozen with the cold night air.

Had it not been that winter had given place to spring, we should never have survived that night. Owing to the change of season we did so, to discover with the morning's dawn that the basin was full to the very brim, our cabin wholly submerged, and the natural fountain of boiling water rising to as great an altitude as ever.

"It'll be weeks before our cave is habitable again," groaned Allan Fraser, to whom I replied as cheerily as I could—

"But doubtless there are many other such caves on the Horn, which only require a good searching for to be found. Why shouldn't we start at once, and, as the north of the island must be warmer than the south, cross this desert and get as quickly as we can to the other side? Five hours will do it."

My proposal was received with favour, and away we went. It was not a pleasant tramp, for it was like traversing the floor of an enormous parrot cage that

hadn't been cleaned very lately, sand, and bird-lime, and moulted feathers being the characteristics of the scenery.

Five hours didn't accomplish the journey, but six did, for though the distance could not have been twenty miles, the ground was heavy. When we reached our goal we found ourselves once more on the brink of the most terrific precipices; but no clouds floated between us and the sea now, for in the less dense atmosphere of spring they had risen to higher altitudes, leaving the atmosphere perfectly and wondrously clear.

I have heard it said that in Australia you can see a human being at a distance that in England you would not be able to distinguish a house. Perhaps owing to the same atmospheric reason it was that from the coign of vantage where we stood, not only could we see, at least twenty-five miles distant, the island of Tierra del Fuego, but also trees that apparently clothed the sides of a ravine. The sight brought tears to our eyes, for we had never expected to have beheld a tree again, but they were far from being tears of unmixed joy, because, alas! we dared not entertain even a hope of ever beholding them any nearer.

Nevertheless we lay down to rest in a spot from which our eyes would be able to gloat on them directly we awoke in the morning, little imagining how much more delightful a sight would then meet our gaze.

It was I who beheld it first, and for a moment I hardly dared believe in its existence, lest disappointment should quickly ensue and positively break my heart. I would not awaken my companion until I was quite convinced that what I looked upon was actually a vessel, a schooner, and that she was making direct for the island.

When I *did* at last rouse him up and point her out,

his conduct betrayed at first the most ecstatic joy, but before long an expression came into his eyes that caused me to shudder, so cruel and at the same time so rapacious was it. I fought against the impression with all my might, but I could not conquer it.

Nearer and nearer drew the little vessel.

"We had better try and signal her," I said at length.

"Well, perhaps so," Fraser answered in a dreamy sort of way; and then he went on—"She must either be a missionary schooner from the Falkland Islands, or a vessel on the look-out for guano deposits. If the latter they are sure to try to land, and if the former the chances are in favour of it also—yes, greatly in favour of it."

"Oh, they evidently intend to land, or they would be giving this island a much wider berth. The sea is like glass just under yon headland. They will anchor there with a spring on the cable, and come ashore in their boats."

I was still running on in this fashion when Allan Fraser suddenly interrupted me with—

"They surely can't distinguish us yet. I don't believe that they can see anything of us yet."

"No, for we shall have to stand on the very brink of the cliff before they can do that," I rejoined carelessly.

"And yet you feel *quite* convinced that they intend to land?"

"None but a fool could doubt it now, Allan."

I remember nothing more except a crushing blow on the head, a vague notion that some one was rifling my pockets, whilst I had not the least power to resist; next of being dragged along the ground several yards by my legs, and then of dropping through space. It did not feel a bit like reality, but resembled a nightmare.

But this confused feeling was not very long passing away, and then I discovered that I was lying across a saddle-shaped, projecting piece of rock, that the precipitous wall of cliff rose some twenty feet sheer above me, and that the sea was rolling in on the black sand at least nine hundred feet below.

In an instant it struck me that Allan Fraser had attacked me suddenly from behind with a stone, and after stunning me, had recovered the Idol's Eye, and then hurled me, as he imagined, into space.

Had not the hand of Providence been held out to catch me, in the shape of that projecting ledge of rock, my fall would have been one of nearly a thousand feet, and I must have been dead long ere it was accomplished, strangled and choked by the mere rapidity of passing through the air. Even as it was, my case was not very much better, for the rock across which I lay, just as a sack of flour might lie across a horse's back, was so slippery that I dared not attempt to alter my position lest I should slide off and drop into the horrid gulf below.

I could not even twist round my face, which was turned towards the cliff, to ascertain where the schooner was, and I dared not cry for assistance, lest Fraser, discovering that I was alive, might lean over the cliff and stone me to death as I lay there, not so much perhaps through innate cruelty as in pure self-defence.

These accumulated fears and horrors caused me to swoon, and when I recovered consciousness it was to thank Heaven that fears and horrors were alike past; for I lay on the top of the ocean mountain once more, with the noose of a long rope tightly encircling my body beneath my arm-pits, and a crowd of wondering and

sympathizing sailors standing all around me waiting for an explanation.

"Yes, he slipped as he stood on the brink of the cliff; he has not been right in his mind for weeks, our misfortunes have prostrated his reason. He will tell you the strangest things, but you must not believe them, for he's quite mad."

So Allan Fraser was saying, whilst wearing the most hang-dog expression of countenance that it is possible to conceive. To him a pleasant-looking little man, who was evidently the captain of the schooner, made the reply—

"All that may be true enough, yet I could almost have sworn that through my telescope I saw you *push* him over."

"He *did* push me over," I at once called out. "He did it after recovering by force the possession of a diamond that he stole from my father's bank in Melbourne. Mad, does he say that I am? Search his pockets, and you will at all events discover that *this* is no insane utterance on my part."

They took me at my word. Allan Fraser was rushed upon, overpowered, and thrown on the ground, and there, sure enough, in one of his waistcoat-pockets was found the Idol's Eye.

"Why," exclaimed the master of the schooner, "this must be the diamond that a young gent named Ogilvie was tried in Melbourne for stealing just before we left that port, six weeks ago. He was found guilty too, and sent to Pentridge Stockade for fifteen years. His case was the talk of the whole city, and every one believed him guilty, and that, finding it impossible to dispose of the gem profitably, he had planted it somewhere."

"Then," said I, "it will pay you far better to return at once to Melbourne, taking us and the diamond along with you, than to cruise about guano-hunting, for the gem is worth fifty thousand pounds, and the bank will be sure to give you a handsome reward for it."

I will cut a long story short by at once stating that the captain of the *Flying Fox* was of exactly my way of thinking, and a few minutes later we were all descending the steep gulch or ravine up which his party had clambered from the beach, and in half-an-hour Idol's Eye and all were aboard of the schooner.

We immediately set sail for Melbourne, but it takes as many months to get from Cape Horn to Hobson's Bay as it does weeks to reach Cape Horn from Hobson's Bay, because you have to stretch so far northward to get clear of those winds that for ever blow, and those huge billows that eternally roll, from west to east, down in those dreary regions where it is a watery waste all around the world. As it was we kept a little to the south of the Tropic of Capricorn, voyaging past and between the beautiful Polynesian islands, and carrying with us perpetual summer. Then, eventually running down Australia's eastern seaboard, we came to Bass's Straits, up which we gallantly beat towards home.

It was evening when we dropped anchor off Sandridge, but I at once went ashore to the police station, and made my report to the inspector on duty, and the consequence was that he immediately despatched two constables on board the *Flying Fox*, who landed Allan Fraser in turn, and lodged him in durance vile.

This effected, I hired a car and drove home to my father's house at South Yarra, which I entered un-

announced, to discover both my parents at supper, and to give them no end of a surprise.

"Why, we never even guessed that you had left England, my dear boy," exclaimed my father excitedly.

"And have been thinking how strange it was that we had received no letter from you," added my mother.

My answer was to cast the Idol's Eye down on the table in front of them.

That was shock No. 2.

"There it is," I said triumphantly, "and the real thief, Allan Fraser, is in Sandridge lock-up! I believed him to be the rogue from the very first, and now I've lots of witnesses to prove it, as well as that he attempted to take my life. That matter I don't want to press against him, but Jock Ogilvie's reputation I will clear."

There is no need to dwell upon what followed. I had of course to give the entire history of my adventures, which would be to the reader a twice-told tale; but they were thoroughly credited, and that was all that I cared about, for I had had some fears that my parents' long and deeply-rooted conviction as to Allan Fraser's saintly and irreproachable character would induce them to believe that I had absconded with the diamond, that my fellow-clerk and travelling companion had discovered the theft, and I had then audaciously and falsely shifted it on to his shoulders. I should have found a difficulty, I feared, in disproving such a charge.

Happily it was not entertained, and after supper my father asked me to do what during its entire continuance I had been longing to undertake, namely, to walk as far as the neighbouring but much more humble

suburb of Richmond, and tell Mrs. Ogilvie how soon her son's character would be vindicated and his innocence proved.

As it was only nine o'clock we made no doubt that the old lady would still be up, and as for a welcome, I should take that with me. And it proved a welcome, sure enough, for I was soon made to feel that the being selected by Providence as the humble agent for giving so much happiness, much more than repaid me for all that I had gone through, both at Cape Horn and during the double journey.

Well, the next day Allan Fraser was arraigned on the charge of embezzlement, and had the audacity and effrontery to accuse me of being the thief, and to declare *himself* to have been the discoverer of the gem in my possession. In short, he attempted to make the Court believe just what I had thought it possible that my parents might have believed in their high opinion of him.

He had far better, however, have left such a scurvy trick untried, for now in very self-defence I was driven to prove his attempt on my life, which I intended to have said nothing about, for *his* having been the diamond robber supplied the only motive for such an attempt. I did prove it to the entire satisfaction of the Court, for the captain of the *Flying Fox* swore most positively that through his telescope he had seen Fraser throw me over the cliff, and his first mate supported his evidence. The result therefore was, that instead of being merely punished as a thief, Fraser got a supplementary sentence as a foiled murderer, his punishment being a cumulative one of fifteen years for each offence, or thirty years in all.

When he found there was no way out of the scrape, and from after experience that Pentridge Prison was a very stern reality, he made a full confession, though most probably from no higher motive than to curry favour with the chaplain, who always has it in his power to make a prisoner's lot much more pleasant, or at all events much more *bearable* than it would otherwise be.

He declared that he had never locked the strong-room door on the afternoon preceding the night on which the diamond was supposed to have been stolen. That he had abstracted it *then*, and also dropped a pencil with Jock Ogilvie's name on it, the burnt-out cigar-light, and so forth, in the dark passage just without the merely handle-turned door, returning to the outside rear of the bank late at night merely to force open the basement window and fix the fragment of torn cloth on the catch, he having chosen it out of a tailor's pattern-book as being so much like the material which composed a well-known suit of Jock Ogilvie's that he himself could hardly have detected the difference.

A few words will now conclude my story. Jock Ogilvie was let out of Pentridge Prison as Allan Fraser was let in, and the latter is still there, his sentence not expiring until 1900. As for Jock, he has been one of the steadiest of the steady, and he is now one of the partners in the bank. Major Montague has long since gone to Europe, taking his diamond with him, though whether he sold it to the Rotterdam merchant for fifty thousand pounds is more than I can say.

MORNING CALL ON ZEBRA WOLVES.

WHAT a lovely summer's morning in early December was that upon which Cyril Cicil and I, during our brief holiday in beautiful Tasmania, set out from Hobart Town, the island's southern capital, to ascend the mighty mountain that rises almost precipitously upwards, to a height of nearly five thousand feet, immediately in the rear of the city.

Before we had well cleared the suburbs it loomed majestically in front of us, above the wild confusion of lesser hills at its foot—its heavy brow bare of trees, a most unusual thing in Tasmania; and the grandeur of its appearance enhanced by its crown of snow, which glittered with rose and opal tints beneath the rays of the hot Southern sun, that illumined on its front a huge colonnade of Titanic greenstone pillars, with a dark fissure here and there; and shone upon the dusky forests that adorn the head of Knocklofty, upon the grass-clad undulations still lower down, and upon the lovely white freestone city which lay between them and the dark blue waters of the Derwent, which from Hobart Town presents the appearance of a lake land-locked by hills.

Mount Wellington is approached from the town by a

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road of singular beauty and seclusion—grim defiles, deep, dark valleys, gorse-clad undulations, and an infinity of sweet-briar and may bushes, whose pink and white blossoms load the air with fragrance, being its chief characteristics.

We found the ascent of the mountain for two-thirds of its altitude very simple and easy, then we had to quit our horses and trust to our climbing powers, and it was not without one or two regular scrambles that we at last gained the summit, the magnificence of the prospect wherefrom would have more than compensated us for ten times the labour and trouble of the ascent.

Hobart Town, although five miles distant from the base of the mountain, appeared to be immediately below our feet, and such was the effect of this singular optical illusion, that it seemed to be a very possible feat to leap from the summit of the basaltic precipice, upon the brink of which we stood, and drop plump into the middle of one of the streets, wherein the cabs, the carts, and the pedestrians, though looking respectively scarcely bigger than flies and fleas, were very plainly visible to the naked eye.

The city (which, by the bye, is a considerable one, having a population of 28,000 souls), with its handsome public buildings of the whitest possible stone, its fine Town-hall, beautiful Catholic cathedral and convent, its numerous church spires, quaint windmills, toy-batteries, streets, terraces, and squares, was spread before us as in a map.

On one side the river stretched away for miles, in a gradually lessening and still lessening line of silver, its banks fringed in some places by dark eucalypti forests, in others by park-like pasture lands of emerald bright-

ness, dotted with tiny villages; or here and there by solitary, one-storeyed, shingle-roofed, whitewash-walled, deep-verandahed stations, the homes of wealthy squatters, who could count their cattle by hundreds and their sheep by thousands.

Close to the town, amidst the glossy foliage of blue gum trees, rose the towers and turrets of Government House, the gay Union Jack floating from the ramparts; and almost bordering on its private grounds we could perceive the many-tinted foliage of the trees in the domain—gum, irsubark, shea-oak, and peppermint—while to the left was the Botanical Garden, with its smooth gravel paths and trimly-kept parterres, all ablaze with the myriad flowers of a thousand climes.

In the opposite direction we could trace the course of the river, widening and still for ever widening towards the Southern Ocean, whose deep blue waters—sweeping for ever eastward before “the brave west winds,” as sailors delight to call them—meet with but one obstacle in the shape of land (Cape Horn) in their mad race round and round the world.

We could plainly see them, though at least forty miles distant (by the aid of our pocket-telescope), breaking in white foam against the base of towering Cape Raoul, out in Storm Bay; and beyond that again, the lofty Schoutens, in a dim, cloud-like mass; the Hipolite Islands; the bold coast-line of Tasman's Peninsula, with its timber-covered hills rising tier above tier in every variety of shape.

Strange to say that, although on looking over one side of Mount Wellington we could see city, village, plain, and river five thousand feet below us, upon gazing in an opposite direction the mountain only

sloped down a matter of a hundred feet or so, and then, far as our vision could reach, we beheld a vast table-land, covered with black forests, amidst which other sterile peaks rose in endless profusion and variety of shape.

Having enjoyed the prospect on all sides, we turned our attention to the mountain itself; inspected the Rocking-stone (many tons in weight, and yet easily set in motion with a push from a finger), and discovered a large black hole, which common rumour asserts to be bottomless, and adown which we cast large stones, listening to their hollow reverberations in their rapid descent until they grew too faint to be longer audible.

Next we visited a small but deep lake—a strange anomaly on a mountain-top—and then having discussed the contents of our knapsack, Cyril Cicil being an ardent entomologist, and I just as enthusiastic a geologist, we appointed to meet at the Rocking-stone in a couple of hours, and each set forth in a different direction in pursuit of his own individual hobby.

I was at last interrupted in my hammering by a sudden and most unexpected thunderstorm, but being at work in a narrow gorge, or ravine, that was literally honey-combed with holes and caverns, I hastily rushed into one of them for shelter.

I had to proceed, however, some considerable way up it before I could find a dry and comfortable resting-place, and when I had discovered one, and was about to sit down, I started back in considerable alarm at observing four gleaming sparks, as of fire, glaring at me from out the darkness.

My hammer was dropped, and a pistol was in each hand in an instant.

Bushrangers were at that time so common in Australia that every one carried fire-arms, and I had become so accustomed to bearing them that I had brought them with me to Tasmania. They were both small, delicately-fashioned, six-chambered revolvers, but desperate fellows at close quarters when one knew how to use them as well as I did.

This was all very well had I ordinary foes to encounter, but those terrible eyes—for eyes I felt sure that they were—gleaming out of the opaque darkness, and belonging to I knew not what, almost unnerved me.

Did they belong to serpents? Scarcely; for they did not move as though set in the ever-vibrating head of a snake, neither had they the brilliant colouring or metallic lustre.

No, they were only red—red as living coals of fire.

“They must belong to beasts of prey, and one of them must be within a dozen yards of me,” I muttered to myself.

However, it was clearly no time for craven fear, so I grasped my revolvers tighter, and with my own eyes fixed on the lurid orbs of the nearest of my unknown foes, I approached him stealthily, and at last dropping on one knee the better to bring myself on a level with his head, I awaited in this attitude, and as patiently as I could, his attack.

I had not to wait long, for presently he uttered a savage snarl like that of an angry dog, but deeper, fiercer, more prolonged, and then I guessed what creatures I was opposed to.

I concluded that they were Tasmanian tigers; that this cave was their den, their lair; and I knew that as likely as not there were a dozen hidden away in its

dark defiles, and if so, the report of my revolver might bring the whole pack down upon me.

A pleasant thought this; but as there was no way of getting out of the difficulty except by showing fight, and to do this effectually I must discharge my fire-arms, come what would of it, I took deliberate aim right between the pair of fiery eyes that were nearest, and was about to pull the trigger, when I noticed that the red orbs were slowly approaching me.

"Come on, my dear friend," I muttered to myself, in grim satisfaction. "The closer the mark, the better the shot. I'll pour my little leaden pills down your very throat if you'll only come near enough!"

Onwards crept the cowardly, slinking brute, closer and closer yet, until at last I could actually see his great head, his expanded jaws, his large, gleaming fangs, and could even feel his hot foetid breath upon my face.

I saw that he was about to spring, so I fired.

The ball must have entered the roof of his mouth and passed through his brain, for he fell back into the darkness without cry or howl.

Then I saw the other two gleaming points of fire advancing upon me like the red lamps of an express train flashing through a tunnel.

I rapidly fired three balls in succession, but every bullet missed its aim, and the next instant I felt myself hurled on to my back, and sharp fangs entering my left shoulder.

Had I lost nerve at that terrible moment my life would have been terminated there and then, but I knew that my right arm was free, that my right hand still grasped a revolver which yet held two charges, if not three.

I strained my neck to catch a clear view of the animal's head in the gloom.

I succeeded, and placing the muzzle of my pistol just inside his ear, I fired, and releasing his earnest, yet anything but friendly, grip on my shoulder, he too fell over on his side dead.

Springing to my feet I glanced round in search for any more fierce, hungry eyes, but to my great relief and inward satisfaction found none. I then dragged, though not without exerting my utmost strength, my two dead antagonists out into the daylight, and discovered them to be, not Tasmanian tigers, but zebra wolves, male and female, and as large as jackals.

You may imagine Cyril Cicil's surprise when, upon meeting him at the Rocking-stone, I took him to the scene of my geological and revolverological exploits, and showed him how I had been employed.

He helped me to skin the brutes, and we returned to Hobart Town tolerably laden. My victims were there duly stuffed, and now adorn the new Tasmanian Museum.

And now perhaps, in conclusion, a few words concerning the genus of which my defunct foes were members may not be considered out of place.

The classical name of the zebra wolf is *Paracyon Cynocephalus*. It is an animal of solitary and retiring habits, and selects for a home some deep recess in the rocks out of the light of day; either by the sea-shore, or near the summits of lofty mountains. In the latter case four thousand feet is by no means an uncommon altitude for its den, and frost and snow do not seem to be objectionable to its tastes.

If he lives by the sea-shore, the zebra wolf will subsist

on mussels, fish, dead seals, crabs, &c., and if his home be in the mountains he will descend at night into the level country, and catch bush kangaroos, or pay devoted attention to a sheep-pen or a hen-roost; for he can digest anything, from a tender chicken to a hedgehog with all its bristles.

In personal appearance he is not handsome, being like a dog as to his head and feet, though with a mouth and fangs very much bigger; whilst his body is that of a lynx, with grey-brown fur, washed with yellow, and black stripes traversing his skin like those of the zebra, from whom he partly takes his name.

He can't climb trees, and, unless very hungry, only ventures out at night. But though cowardly by nature, he will fight in a desperate manner when at bay; and if he can catch a solitary traveller asleep or otherwise off his guard, he will make very short work of him.

I know that all my friends and acquaintances in Hobart Town and at home in Australia thought that I had been remarkably lucky in escaping from the clutches of Monsieur and Madame Zebra Wolf so easily as I did.



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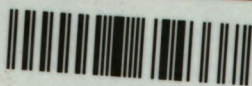
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